

Living as Children of God



SABBATH—AUGUST 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 3:5; Psalm 51:4; Isaiah 1:2; John 1:12; Hebrews 9:26, 28; 1 John 3:1–10.

MEMORY VERSE: “How great is the love the Father has given us so freely! Now we can be called children of God. And that’s [that is] what we really are! The world doesn’t [does not] know us because it didn’t [did not] know him” (1 John 3:1, NirV).

A NEW CHRISTIAN CAME TO SEE THE PREACHER AND SAID, “No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I am no longer saved.” The preacher answered, “Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained. He never makes a mess. He is obedient. He is a pure joy to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess. He throws his food around. He makes his clothes dirty. He is a total mess. But who is going to inherit [receive] my estate [property]? Not my dog! My son is my heir.¹ You are Jesus Christ’s heir because it is for you that He died.” We are children of God and heirs of His kingdom. This is not through our perfection but by His grace.²

This week we learn more about what this promise includes.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What does it mean to be a “son of God”? In what ways should we want to be “like God”? How does John describe sin? What did Jesus do about sin at His first coming? How are we to understand John’s words that the one who is born of God “does not sin” (1 John 3:9, NKJV)?

1. heir—a person who receives the money and material possessions of someone who dies.

2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 9**SONS OF GOD (1 John 3:1)**

What wonderful promise is found in 1 John 3:1? What does that promise include? What hope should it give us? Read also John 1:12; 1 John 2:29; and 1 John 3:9.

First John 3:1 points to a spiritual birth. John 1:12 calls our attention to the faith in Christ by which we become children of God. First John 3:1 teaches that believers are already God's children. God has taken the first step to do this for us. The new birth is His work, not ours. We cannot boast about our own birth or our adoption as God's children. Also, we do not need to worry about our position as children of God as long as we continue our relationship with Him. This relationship is described as one between a father and a child. So, it is very close. The Perfect Father takes care of us, loves us, and gave His life for us.



The new birth is God's work, not ours.

Stop and think about the true meaning of the promise that we are the children of God. At last count there were more than four hundred billion *seeable* galaxies³ in the universe.⁴ Each galaxy holds billions of stars. Who knows how many planets are among those stars? And how many have intelligent people? When we think about how huge (big) the universe is to our planet, how can we not be surprised that God loves us and has made us His children? What a wonderful feeling this should give us about what our lives mean! What hope, what promise, what faith we should have for the future, no matter how difficult our lives may be! God, the Creator, loves us, cares for us, and calls us His children. The New International Version (NIV) translates 1 John 3:1 freely but catches its meaning well by saying the Father lavished (poured) His great love on us.

Think deeply about the idea that God does not only live but also He loves us, cares for us, and even died for us. How should this fact influence⁵ us in how we live? Why?

MONDAY—AUGUST 10

**RESULTS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES (DUTIES)
(1 John 3:2, 3)**

3. galaxies—groups of stars.

4. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

5. influence—to have power or an effect over persons or things.

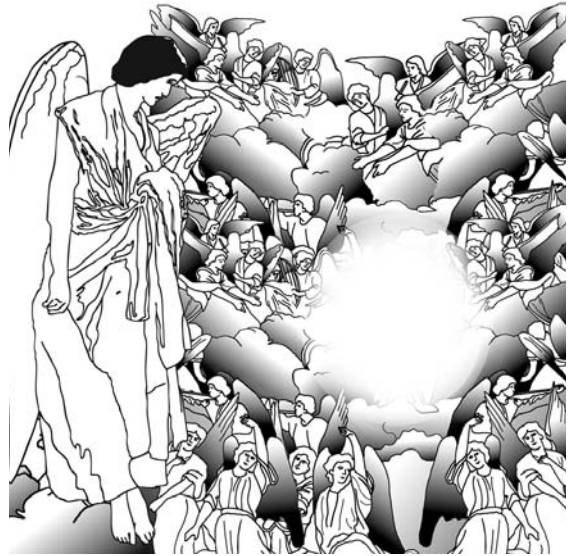
First John 3:1 is an introduction to the thoughts for the rest of the verses for this week. It points to results of this Father/child relationship, including responsibilities. As a result of their relationship with God, believers live a pure life not under the control of sin (verses 3–10). But John says that we will see Him and will be like Him.

We know of our present condition as children of God. But we also know the future even will be more wonderful, even though we may not fully understand it. That we will see the Lord and be like Him should fill us with joy, awe, and wonder.

What is the difference between Satan’s and Eve’s wish to be like God in Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:14; and Ezekiel 28:2, and the promise of 1 John 3:2 that we will be like Him?

Satan wanted to be the same as God in power and may have wanted the worship of all created beings. But it seems Satan was not interested in being the same as God in character.⁶ Satan’s desire to be like God in power did not deepen his relationship with God. Instead, it has ruined it.

Christians will be like God, but they do not want to take God’s place. They want to be like Him in loving others and in showing pure thoughts and right actions. They respect the basic difference between Creator and creature.



Satan desired to be like God in power.

And they do not want to change it. For them love is important, not power. As Jesus showed us, to be like God is to give of oneself totally and unselfishly for the good of others. Jesus came to show us what the Father is like. “Jesus answered ‘Don’t [Do not] you know me, Philip? I have been among you such a long time! Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’ ” (John 14:9, NIV).

Think of the unbelievable difference between the character of Jesus and the character of Satan. Satan was created, but he looked for a position higher than he had. He did so for a purely personal and selfish reason. But Jesus—the Creator—chose to make Himself

6. character—who someone is; all that a person does, feels, and thinks are what he or she is made of.

“nothing” (Philippians 2:7, NIV), all for the good of others. How can you change to be more like Christ?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 11

A DEFINITION OF SIN (1 John 3:4)

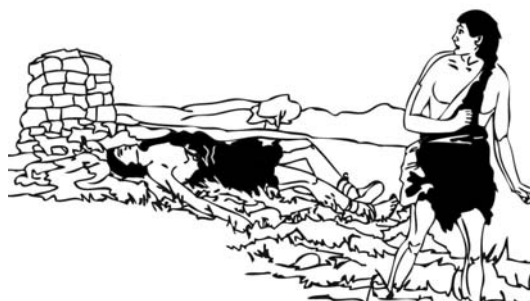
The false teachings that John wrote of in these letters may have pointed to the blessing of being saved. But the false teachings also may have ignored the importance of living pure lives. The false teachers may not have worried about the problem of sin or its results. So, John explains that our future is dependent on how we live now. This has nothing to do with how good we try to be through works. We are saved by grace alone. But our lives must show we are saved. So, John goes on to show what that means. This is after he has called Christians to make themselves pure.

What do the following verses Exodus 9:27; Psalm 36:3; Psalm 51:4; Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 3:13; Matthew 7:23; Romans 6:17, 20; 1 John 1:8; 1 John 3:4; and 1 John 5:17 tell us about the nature of sin?

The Bible describes sin as lying, breaking God’s standard of truth, rebellion (war against God), disobeying God’s law, and being unholy.

In 1 John 3:4, sin is described as “breaking the law” (NIV). John later in 1 John 3:11–20 tells the story of Cain, who murdered his brother. This

is a clear example of lawlessness. Then in verses 22 and 24 of the same chapter, John points to the commandments and the need to keep them.



Cain’s murder of his brother Abel was a clear example of lawlessness.

The word *lawlessness* reminds us of the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NIV), the best example of the antichrist, and the end of his work just before the Second Coming. This lawlessness is shown by the antichrists in 1 John, who rebel against God and join themselves with Satan. Church members are warned in 1 John 3:4 not to accept such an attitude (thought or feeling). It is strange in the Christian world today that many of the same preachers who preach against sin continue to make the claim that God’s law has been removed because we are now under grace. What a terrible twist of what grace is all about!

What is your favorite sin? What sin are you still taking part in? How do you excuse it in your mind? How much less sinful does it seem with each passing year? When are you going to realize that sooner or later, it will destroy you

if you do not claim God's power to overcome it?

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 12

**THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS
(1 John 3:5, 8)**

What do 1 John 1:2 and 1 John 3:5, 8 tell us about Jesus and what happened at His first coming?

At His first coming, Jesus appeared in human flesh. He came to solve the sin problem. And He came to destroy the works of the devil. Because this is so, believers cannot have anything to do with sin or the author of sin, the devil. By making common cause with sin, we are making common cause with Satan and are refusing Jesus.

According to 1 John 3:5, Jesus takes away sins. This seems to point to John 1:29. How did Jesus succeed in doing this work according to Hebrews 9:26, 28; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10; and Revelation 1:5, 6?

First John 3:5 does not tell us how Jesus took away sins. But 1 John and the book of John make it clear that Jesus took away sin by dying on the cross. Hebrews clearly says Jesus did away with sin by giving up His sinless life. Revelation teaches that Jesus freed us from our sins by His blood.

The first part of 1 John 3:5 may point to the Cross. But the second part focuses on the sinlessness of

Jesus. His sinlessness was needed for His death on the cross to save us.

The antichrists of 1 John may not have understood fully the true value of the Cross and why Jesus died there in our place. How foolish because Jesus paid the penalty (price) for all our sins and died in our place! This fact forms the foundation of God's plan for saving us from sin. Christ's death was the only way possible for humans (men, women, and children) to be saved and have the promise of eternal (forever; without end) life. To miss that is to miss the purpose of the entire gospel (good news about Jesus).



The blood of Jesus frees us from sin.

In your own struggles with sin, guilt, fear, and lack of faith, how does the Cross answer these challenges for you? How can you improve your chance for the hope and promises we have through Jesus, not just for forgiveness but for power to overcome?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 13**NO SIN! (1 John 3:6, 9)****How can 1 John 3:6, 8, 9 be compared⁷ with 1 John 1:6–2:1, 2?**

First John 3:6 and 9 hold strong and puzzling statements. They say that no one who lives in Jesus and no child of God sins. This sounds almost too perfect! Christians have wrestled with these statements and have tried to find explanations. After all, what true Christians have not wrestled with sins in their lives?

What we can safely say is the apostle John does not say one thing and then another. In chapter 1, John says people who claim to be without sin only fool themselves. In chapter 2, he points to our goal, which is not to sin. But he adds if we do, then we have an Advocate (Lawyer) with the Father, Jesus Christ. Our verses must be understood on the basis of our study on the topic of sin: Christians stay away from sin. But if they sin, they confess their wrongdoing and accept God's forgiveness.

Bible thinkers have come up with different ways to solve these difficult verses. Two are shortly listed below:

1. John pictures the ideal (perfect standard) in 1 John 3:6, 8, 9. He also mentions this ideal in 1 John 2:1. John wants his hearers and readers to be clear about the issue of sin. Sin cannot be taken lightly. Followers of Christ cannot play (fool) with sin.

2. The verb *to sin* and *to do (sin)* are found in the present tense. This often points to continuous (ongoing; not stopping) actions. The meaning would be that disciples (followers) of Christ cannot continuously sin. They may fall in sin here and there. But they have separated themselves from sin and do not practice a life of sin. They are not controlled by sin. The New International Version (NIV) follows this view by translating the verbs with *to continue to sin*.

No matter which interpretation (meaning) is accepted, chapter 3 must depend on chapters 1 and 2 to be understood. Sin is real. Christians have no choice but to put it away from their lives, no matter the cost.

OK, you are a sinner. No one is going to argue that. The question is, How much blood, sweat, and tears have you shed in the battle against sin in your life? In what ways does your answer help explain your lifestyle?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 14

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Romans 8:12–17; Philippians 2:14–16.

“Let no one fool themselves with the belief that they can become holy while breaking one of God's requirements [rules]. The guilt of a known sin makes the witnessing voice of the Spirit silent and separates the soul from God. ‘Breaking the law is sin.’

7. compared—to have shown how two things are the same.

And ‘no one who keeps on sinning has seen him or known him.’ 1 John 3:5, 6 [NirV]. In his letters, John focuses so fully on love. But yet he does not waste time in showing the true character of all who say they are righteous while breaking the law of God. . . . And the claim to be without sin proves that he who makes this claim is not holy.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, pages 472, 473.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What does it mean to be like God? In what ways can we be like God in a positive way and in a negative one?
- ❷ Some people are afraid of the idea that we are saved only by what Jesus has done for us. They say, if being saved depends on Christ’s righteousness (holy life) and not on our own, what can stop us from continuing in sin? How would you answer that?
- ❸ Someone once explained his un-

derstanding of the Cross this way: “I do not use the Cross as an excuse or a cover for sin. What the Cross does for me is keep me from giving up on God when I do sin.” Discuss the reasoning in that line of thought.

- ❹ It is impossible not to be influenced by⁸ whatever society and culture you live in. In your society, what sins are judged to be really bad that perhaps in another culture might not be judged so bad, or not even bad at all? How much should we let society influence our understanding of what sin is? What sins does your society not frown on that the Bible is clear about?
- ❺ We all know the promises we are given for victory over sin. At the same time, suppose someone is struggling with a sin (maybe smoking or drinking alcohol) and decides to get professional help and counseling. What would you say to the person who thinks those who get professional help are showing a lack of faith in God’s power?

8. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.