

Children of God

1 John 5:18-21

About a month-and-a-half ago I preached a message titled “Born of God.” In that message I pointed out people need to do more than simply believe in Jesus to become children of God. Yes, it’s important to believe the right things about Jesus. In fact, it’s essential. But to receive eternal life and become a child of God, you must believe in Jesus AND

accept him as Savior and Lord. John 1:12 says, “Yet to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Believe AND receive – that’s what it takes to become a child of God.

The Bible has as lot to say about children of God – those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord ... those who have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit (see John 3:3-8).

In the last four verses of 1 John (1 John

5:18-21), we learn at least six things about God's children.

This morning, as we look briefly at these six details, I hope and pray we will realize that as children of God we are greatly blessed and have many privileges.

But we also need to realize that our blessings and privileges come with responsibilities. God expects much from those who have been given much (see Luke 12:48). He expects the blessed to be

a blessing to others. May the blessed do their best and be a blessing!

That said let's talk about children of God. In 1 John 5:18 we learn that children of God do not practice sin. The first part of 1 John 5:18 says, "We know that anyone born of God does not continue in sin." This does NOT mean that people stop sinning when they become followers of Christ. We all know better, don't we?

What the Apostle John means when he says that “anyone born of God does not continue to sin” is that when someone becomes a follower of Jesus, that person does not continue in a life of habitual sin with no desire or intent to repent (see note on 1 John 3:6,9).

One of the habitual sins in my life when I accepted Christ was the sin of alcohol abuse. When I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior at the age of twenty-three, I had been an alcohol abuser for

about eight years. For me the sin of alcohol abuse was not an easy sin to overcome. In fact, I continued to struggle with this sin for about a year-and-a-half after I accepted Christ. I didn't drink as much as I did in my "younger days" but on occasion I did get drunk.

I knew what the Bible said about drunkenness – it's a sin (see Gal. 5:19-21) – and I knew that as a follower of Jesus I could not continue in this sinful habit.

Finally, after struggling with this for

about a year-and-a –half I pled with God in prayer to help me kick this sinful habit.

I was serious about doing this, and so was God. As I prayed God, spoke to me – not in an audible voice – but he spoke to me. He said, “I’ll help you kick your sinful habit, but I want you to do three things.” That’s how God works: If we do what we can do, God will do what we can’t do. This is what God told me to do: He said 1) get rid of all the alcohol in your house, 2) stop hanging around with your

drinking buddies, and 3) stay out of the bar rooms. God said, “If you do these three things, I’ll help you to overcome you sinful habit.” I listened to God and with his help I overcame my sinful habit.

Listen carefully. With God’s help we can overcome any sinful habit. If we have a sincere desire to kick a sinful habit and we make a sincere effort, God will do his part and make it happen. Never say, “I can’t!” Nothing is impossible with God (see Luke 1:37)! We can do ALL things

through him who gives us strength (see Phil. 4:13)!

In 1 John 5:18 we learn a second detail about children of God. We learn that children of God are protected from Satan by Jesus. The latter part of 1 John 5:18 says, “The one who was born of God [the only born Son of God, Jesus – see John 3:16] keeps him [the child of God] safe, and the evil one [Satan] does not touch him [the child of God].”

Listen carefully. Satan can tempt a child of God – Satan can try to lead a child of God astray – but Satan cannot touch a child of God unless God allows it.

And as we read through the Bible we discover that these allowances are rare.

In fact, the only definite example of God allowing Satan to touch a believer is found in the Book of Job (see Job 2:4-7).

This has led me to believe that God’s “deal” with the devil, concerning Job, was a once and done thing.

1 John 5:8 tells us that the one born of God [the Lord Jesus] keeps children of God safe. Both Jesus and guardian angels (see Heb. 11:14 and Psalm 91:11) protect us from Satan and his demons. These evil beings cannot touch us or possess us (the Holy Spirit and a demon spirit cannot occupy the same body). Isn't that good to know?

We must remember, however, that Satan can and will use non-Christians to harm and even kill followers of Jesus.

I'm convinced that Satan is behind most, if not all, of the persecution and martyrdom of Christians. And Satan's evil influence is everywhere. 1 John 5:19 says the whole world is under his control. But we need not fear him. 1 John 4:4 tells us that we have overcome him, because the one who is in us – the Holy Spirit – is greater than he is!

1 John 5:20 gives us a third detail about children of God. In 1 John 5:20 we learn that children of God have the ability

to understand spiritual truth. The first part of 1 John 5:20 says, “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding.”

Anyone can read the Bible and understand it, to a certain extent. Everyone can get something out of the Bible. But only born again children of God can understand the spiritual truths of the Bible.

Often times we look at people who reject or neglect Jesus and ask, “Why

aren't they thinking and acting right?"

Why? Because they don't get it! They don't understand! They CAN'T understand, because they don't have the Holy Spirit.

Listen to what it says in 1 Cor. 2:14.

“The man without the Spirit [the unbeliever] does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God [the Bible was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – see 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Pet. 1:20,21], for they are foolishness to

**him, and he cannot understand them,
because they are spiritually discerned
[understood through the Spirit].” Listen
carefully. One needs the enlightenment of
the Holy Spirit to understand the
spiritual truths of God.**

**When you believe in Jesus and accept
him as Savior and Lord, the Bible teaches
that the Holy Spirit comes to live within
you (see 1 Cor. 6:19 and Gal. 3:21). Talk
about awesome! God lives in you and you
live in God (see 1 John 4:15)! And as you**

read the Word of God and hear the Word of God and study the Word of God, the indwelling Spirit of God teaches you the spiritual truths of God. Aren't you glad that God has given you the Spirit of understanding (see 1 Cor. 2:9-12)?

In 1 John 5:20 we learn a fourth detail about children of God. We learn that children of God have come to know the true God through Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:20 says, "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us

understanding [we've already talked about this], so that we may know him who is true [God the Father]. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ.”

Over the years mankind has created and worshiped many so-called gods. But no matter how many gods are created and worshiped, there is only one true God, the God of the Bible. And the Bible tells us that the only way we can know the true God is through faith in Jesus Christ. In

John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Could it be any clearer? Aren’t you glad you know Jesus?

In the latter part of 1 John 5:20 we learn a fifth detail about children of God. We learn that children of God have eternal life. 1 John 5:20 says, “And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” One of the great truths of

**the Bible is that God, who IS eternal life,
GIVES eternal life to those who trust and
obey his Son Jesus.**

**When the Bible says that only God's
children receive eternal life, it does not
mean that only followers of Jesus will live
forever. The Bible teaches that the
spiritual part of all human beings lives
beyond the grave (see Luke 12:4,5; Luke
16:22,23; and Acts 7:59). But only those
who have eternal life will experience a
peaceful eternity in God's presence.**

According to Rev. 20:10-15, those who DON'T have eternal life will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. So, eternal life refers to both a quantity AND quality of life. Children of God can look forward to a day when there will be no more hunger, no more thirst, no more crying, and no more pain (see Rev. 7:16,17 and 21:4). That's as good as it gets!

In 1 John 5:21 we learn a sixth and final detail about children of God. We

learn that children of God must have no other gods before them. 1 John 5:21 says, “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.”

When John wrote what we call the Book of 1 John, it was common for people to bow down and worship statues that were carved from wood or stone. No doubt John had this heathen practice in mind when he wrote this last verse. This kind of idol worship may not be as common in our day as it was back in the

first century, but other kinds of idol worship are commonly practiced throughout the world.

Idols come in many forms. Anyone or anything that we put before God is an idol. Children of God must have no other gods before God (see Ex. 20:3). To be the people God wants us to be we need to put HIM first in our lives. We need to live life HIS way. We need to say, “Lord, I’m yours. You’re the potter, I’m the clay.

Use your hands to shape me. Help me to be like your Son Jesus.”

It’s so neat to be a child of God. There are so many blessings and privileges. But these blessings and privileges come with responsibilities. Let’s remember that.

Let’s remember that we who ARE blessed and privileged need to do OUR best to be a blessing to others.