

I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT
VIII. Discerning True Fellowship With God By Its Righteousness
(1 John 2:28-3:10a)

I. Introduction

- A. 1 John was written to counter heretical views (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 881), so the epistle provides discernment, and is thus “filled with contrasts – light and darkness (1:6-7; 2:8-11); love of world and love of God (2:15-17); children of God and children of the devil (3:4-10); the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist (4:7-12, 16-21).” (Ryrie Study Bible KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the First Letter of John: Contents,” p. 1770)
- B. We view the epistle for much needed spiritual discernment in our era, and study John’s teaching on discerning true fellowship with God by its righteousness in 1 John 2:28-3:10a for our insight, application and edification:

II. Discerning True Fellowship With God By Its Righteousness, 1 John 2:28-3:10a.

- A. 1 John 2:28 begins a new section, for John’s reference to “little children” (KJV) translates the Greek noun *teknia* that refers to all of God’s spiritual offspring regardless of their level of spiritual maturity. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 817) This section *introduces* the thought of preparing to meet the Lord at the rapture with confidence and not shame by fellowshiping with Him in practicing righteousness in life, 1 John 2:28-29.
- B. To prepare to meet the Lord, we believers who have that hope purify ourselves from sin by confessing it to the Lord and by relying on the Holy Spirit to sustain a righteous life before the Lord, 1 John 3:1-3:
1. John mentioned the great love that God the Father has bestowed on us believers in Christ seen in the fact that He has called us sons of God, and because we are sons of God, the world “does not experientially know” (*ginoskei*) us because it “has not come experientially to know” (*egno*) the Father, 1 John 3:1; *Ibid.*
 2. Though we currently are sons of God, the glory we shall visually display is not yet visible, but we know absolutely (*oidamen*, *Ibid.*) that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is in all of His heavenly, divine glory, 1 John 3:2.
 3. This hope of reflecting the glory of God motivates us as believers to confess any sin we have committed and to rely on the Holy Spirit for sustained righteousness in living, 1 John 3:3 with 1:9; Galatians 5:16.
- C. In addressing the need to purify ourselves, John defined certain facts about sin and righteousness and also about believers and unbelievers that his readers not be deceived by false teachers about them, 1 John 3:4-10a:
1. John stated that whosoever commits sin commits “lawlessness” (*anomia*, Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 39), that is, he violates the written law of Scripture, for sin is lawlessness, 1 John 3:4.
 2. We also know absolutely (*oidate*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) that Christ appeared to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin, 1 John 3:5.
 3. Thus, whosoever fellowships with (“abideth in Him” KJV) Christ does not sin, and whosoever sins has not seen Him nor come to know (*egnoken*, *Ibid.*, p. 818) Him in the sense of fellowship with Him, 1 John 3:6.
 4. John then urged his readers to let no false teacher deceive them about the following facts, 1 John 3:7-10a:
 - a. First, he who commits righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous, 1 John 3:7.
 - b. Second, he who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning, 1 John 3:8a. By these two claims, John did not mean that a believer never commits sin, for in 1 John 3:3 he stated that every son of God purifies himself as Christ is pure, implying that true believers can sin. Rather, John here contrasts the new nature in a believer that is born of God that cannot sin [opposite the heretics whom John was countering in this epistle] with the sinful nature in the unsaved who are children of the devil who cannot help but commit sin. (*Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 893-895 with John 8:44; *Ibid.*, p. 881)
 - c. For this reason, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil, v. 8b.
 - d. Thus, all who are born of God do not commit sin (in their new natures), for God’s seed remains in them (in their new natures), and they cannot sin because they (in their new natures) are born of God, 1 John 3:9.
 - e. In this contrast is manifested the “offspring” (*teknia*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) of God and the “offspring” (*teknia*, *Ibid.*) of the devil, 1 John 3:10a.

Lesson: *We must not be deceived about the fact that a believer’s new nature that is born of God is unable to violate Scripture and sin, where the sinful nature by which unbelievers function cannot help but sin and violate God’s Word. Since we believers are born of God to be sons of God destined to participate in God’s glory, we should then purify ourselves of sin by confession and rely on the Holy Spirit to live righteously to prepare to meet the Lord.*

Application: *May we who were saved to live righteously live righteously in hope of our future destiny with God.*