

BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF ERIE
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THE GENUINE AND COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIAN

I JOHN 3:1-10

The United States Treasury Department has a special group of men whose job it is to track down counterfeiters. Naturally, these men need to know a counterfeit bill when they see it. How do they learn to identify fake bills? **1 John 3**, which warns us that in today's world there are counterfeit Christians - "children of the devil" (**1 John 3:10**). But instead of listing the evil characteristics of Satan's children, the Scripture gives us a clear description of *God's* children. The contrast between the two is obvious. In the first two chapters the emphasis was on *fellowship*: a Christian who is in fellowship with God will practice righteousness and will love the brethren. But in **1 John 3-5**, the emphasis is on *sonship*: because a Christian is "born of God," he will practice righteousness and will love the brethren. "**Born of God**" is the idea that is basic to these chapters (**Vs. 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18**).

When you read **1 John 3:1-10** in the *Authorized Version (KJV)*, you may be startled by **1 John 3:6 and 9**, which seem to contradict **1 John 1:8-9**. Warren Wiersbe says, "*The Authorized translation of the verbs here is not accurate. What the Greek text really says is: 'No one who abides in Him practices sin; no one who practices sin has seen Him or knows Him' (1 John 3:6). 'No one who is born of God practices sin... he cannot practice sin because he is born of God' (1 John 3:9). To 'practice' sin is to sin consistently and as a way of life. It does not refer to committing an occasional sin. It is clear that no Christian is sinless (1 John 1:8-10), but God expects a true believer to sin less, not to sin habitually.*" Many great personalities mentioned in the Bible sinned at one time or another life.

The difference is that a true Christian knows God. A counterfeit Christian may talk about God and get involved in "religious activities," but he does not really *know* God. John gives us three reasons for a holy dedicated life.

I. GOD THE FATHER LOVES US Vs. 1-3

The whole wonderful plan of salvation begins with the love of God. "**Sons / Children of God**" is not simply a high-sounding name that we bear; *it is a reality! We are God's children!* **V-1** tells us *what we are* and **V-2** tells us *what we shall be*. The reference here, of course, is to the time of Christ's coming for His church. This was mentioned in **1 John 2:28** as

an incentive for holy living, and now it is repeated. But the apostle does not stop here! He has told us what we *are* and what we *shall be*. Now, in **V-3**, he tells us *what we should be*. In view of the return of Jesus Christ, we should keep our lives clean.

II. GOD THE SON DIED FOR US Vs. 4-8

John turns here from the future appearing of **Jesus V-2** to His past appearing **V-5** where the word "**manifest**," kjv, means "**appear**"). John gives two reasons why Jesus came and died:

1. To *take away* our sins (**1 John 3:4-6**), and
2. To *destroy* the works of the devil (**1 John 3:7-8**). The emphasis here is not on sins (plural), but on *sin* (singular): "Whosoever *practices sin*" **V-6** *Sins* are the fruit, but *sin* is the root.
****Sin is basically a matter of the will.**

Satan is a rebel, but Christ is the obedient Son of God. **Destroy (1 John 3:8)** does not mean "**annihilate**." Satan is certainly still at work today! Destroy, here, means "**to render inoperative, to rob of power.**" **V-7** Counterfeit Christians were trying to convince true believers that a person could be "saved" and still practice sin.

III. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES IN US Vs. 9-10

"*Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin!*" (**V-9**) **The Living Bible** reads, "*The person who has been born into God's family does not make a practice of sinning because now God's life is in him; so he can't keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him - he has been born again.*" **The New Living Translation** reads, "*Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God.*" **Why?** Because he has a new nature within him, and that new nature *cannot habitually practice sin*. **John calls this new nature God's "seed."**

Justification means a new *standing* before God, **sanctification** means being *set apart* to God, and **regeneration** means a new *nature* - God's nature (**Vs. 2 Peter 1:4**). Physical life produces only physical life; spiritual life produces spiritual life (**John 3:6**). Just as physical children bear the nature of their parents, so God's spiritual children bear His nature. The divine "**seed**" is in them. A Christian has an old nature from his physical birth and a new nature from his spiritual birth. Yielding to sin is the distinguishing mark of "*the children of the devil*" (**1 John 3:10**). They *profess*, or claim, one thing, but they *practice* another. How does a child of God go about overcoming the desires of the old nature? He must begin each day by yielding his body to God as a living sacrifice (**Romans 12:1**). A true believer does not practice sin; a counterfeit believer cannot help but practice sin, because he does not have God's new nature within him.

There is the Genuine and there is a Counterfeit, where are YOU?