

Christ Community Covenant Church
Sermon Notes for Further Study & Discussion
How to Be a Child of God
Pastor Scott Parr - March 23, 2014

Today's main point:

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." 1 John 5:1

We find salvation in becoming children of God. When we live as children of God, we find assurance, responsibility, and freedom.

As I studied 1 John 5 this week, a theme stood out to me that has been a significant theme of what God has been teaching me over the last couple of years. It's this image that by faith in Jesus Christ, we are children of God. **And so this morning, we're going to look at this beautiful truth (1 John 5:1) that "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." And as we understand salvation through the lens of being children of God, I also want you to think about how when we live as children of God, we find assurance, responsibility, and freedom.**

1. Being a child of God is one of many ways to understand what Jesus did for us on the cross...

I used to think the main (and maybe only) way to understand Christ's atonement for our sin was in the image of a courtroom, where God was the judge, and each of us stood there, guilty, because of our sin. Every human has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all stand before God guilty. And the penalty of sin is death. And so it would seem that we are hopeless. But God, who is rich in mercy, so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life. Though we were all guilty, God offered Jesus in our place, to take all of our guilt upon himself. Because he was fully man, he could represent us. Because he was sinless and fully God, he had the power to take all of our place, taking all of our sin and death upon himself on the cross. And so the great exchange took place – Christ took on our guilt and our punishment, and all who accept this take on Christ's innocence – God now sees believers as innocent; righteous. And when God raises Jesus from the dead three days later, death is conquered, Jesus Christ is vindicated, the penalty is paid, and all is well. Salvation is found in Christ's substitution for our punishment.

This is certainly a good way of explaining what Jesus did. But it's not the only metaphor the Bible uses to explain this beautiful, mystical, mysterious truth of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

I want to show you how in 1 John 5, and throughout scripture, salvation is found in being a child of God. I personally have found this tremendously helpful to understand God, salvation, and my identity as a follower of Christ.

2. We find salvation in becoming children of God

a. You can become a child of God by believing in Jesus. 1 John 5:1 "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

We are not all born children of God, but it's a right God gives to those who believe: Without Jesus, we were enemies of God, aliens, strangers. We were not God's people.

John 1:12 says, "But to all who did **receive** him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the **right** to become children of God." "You were not my people, but now you are my people." (1 Peter 2:10; Romans 9:25, Hosea 2:23)

God **adopts** us into his family. (Galatians 4 – "you are no longer a slave, but a son")

b. Believing in Jesus unites us with God. 1 John 5:20b "...and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ, He is the true God and eternal life." This "in him" is also translated "united with him". We who believe are united with Jesus (who is also united with the Father). Colossians 3:3 puts it, "for you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." In some mysterious way, when we believe in Jesus, our lives are united with God in heaven. And with that, comes union with God's eternal life.

c. United with God, we share in his eternal life. 1 John 5:11-13: "...God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life."

It's not just that God programs like a video game cheat code into your life so that now your life will never end. It's that we are united with Christ. In some spiritual way, we are one with him. We are one with him even now, but in heaven

we will experience that union with him in all of his glory. It's not just that he turns off a death code – it's that he unites us with himself. This eternal life, it says in verse 11 is in his Son. And when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we have that life. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

And so here's what we've done so far – I hope you have seen that a beautiful way we can understand salvation is that through Jesus Christ, we are saved from death into eternal life, united with God by union with his Son, sharing in God's eternal life.

3. I think we can understand how God loves us and how we live as children of God when we think about how we love kids, or even how we love pets.

Now that I have children of my own, I think God has been showing me his heart as a loving Father in the way I feel love for my kids.

I have had this deep love for them, since even before they were born. I feel a desire to love and care and give myself away for them.

Even when they disobey me, I love them, and they are still my children. Jesus told a story of how God is like a father who, even though his son runs away, taking his inheritance and abandoning the family, the father still runs out to embrace the son when he returns.

My children are mine, and how do they show it? If Becki were to drop the kids off at a day care, and I was to come and pick them up, how would the day care workers know they were really my children? Hopefully they would have safe sign-out practices, but they would easily see how my kids love me, call me by name, and respond to my voice. This has been coming up repeatedly in first John – how do we know if someone is really a child of God? If they obey God, if they love God's people, if they do what God wants them to do. Do any of us do this perfectly? No. Do my kids obey me perfectly? No way. Do I want them to? Yes. Do I love them and call them my children, even when they disobey? Absolutely.

Look at verse 21. This letter of 1 John ends on an abrupt goodbye: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Doesn't it seem like an unusual way to end a letter? "And P.S., don't do that!" But when we think of God as a loving Father and ourselves as his children, it makes so much sense. God's heart is, "I don't want you to love anyone else or call anyone or anything else Father!" We have constant voices around us in school, in our communities, in the media, saying, "Isn't it too narrow to say that Jesus is the only way to God? How dare you say that anyone's belief might be false! Can't we just say that all religions are equal – just practice a religion sincerely, and you are in good with the divine." But is that what the Bible is saying? No. The Heavenly Father, the creator of the universe is saying, "I don't want you to practice a religion, just any religion. I want you to be my child. I'm the Father and I want you to know ME and be united with ME. And I gave you one way to become my child – my Son, Jesus Christ."

When I think of my love for my own kids, I get a little bit of God's Father-heart for us. I would be crushed if my kids started calling someone else daddy. And if they started following the influence of any person who didn't love them like Becki and I do, they would be in serious danger.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are a child of God.

Remember that you are a child of God, so that...

a. You have assurance of eternal life

Once you are a child, you are always a child. When I imagine God as a judge, I'm thankful to be declared innocent, but I'm not sure what to do about it when I sin again. Am I constantly blemishing that new, innocent record the judge has given me? Sometimes I think many people imagine that if our tally of sins got up to some mark outweighing our good deeds, the Judge would just say, "enough!" But when I imagine God as Father, it makes sense to me that I'm in his love forever, even when I sin. Yes, the Father wants his children to grow, and we want to grow in our love and obedience for him, but we don't need to live freaked out about my sin or about trying to attain perfection. I can understand God's forgiveness in the context of knowing God as a loving Father who says "now, you're in my family, and you have eternal life with me."

So we can have this reassurance when we live as children of God.

b. When you live as a child of God, ***you live into the responsibility of the Father's mission.***

Our Father is the King of the universe!

We have a great name to represent!

We have great work to do!

Don't waste your life loafing on the couch or wallowing in sin.

You are a child of the King of the Universe, and he wants the world to know his love, his truth, and his justice. God calls us to join his kingdom mission!

c. When you live as a child of God, ***You live in the freedom of being a humble child***

Jesus repeatedly called us to be like little children. "You must have faith like a little child." "Whoever wants to become great in the kingdom of Heaven must become like this little child." "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, because to such as these belongs the Kingdom of heaven."

And so our job is to live in the beautiful simplicity of living like little children.

Good news! You don't need to be consumed by trying to be powerful or competent, good enough or strong enough. You don't have to be the best, you don't have to have it all together. Your job is to be a humble child, dependent on God.

I was having breakfast with a friend who is kind of a big deal with a San Francisco tech company, and he said, "sometimes, I really am struggling to figure out what to do at work, and then I'll stop and pray, 'Father, I'm just your little child and I don't know what to do here. What do you want me to do?'"

When we live as little children, we don't get wrapped up in all the pressure to carry the world on our shoulders.

My son, Isaac, will sit at the table letting his food get cold, just because he wants to sit on my lap. "Daddy, sit on your wap?" What if much more of the time, that's how we were with God – what I want more than anything else right now, is just to be with you.

Conclusion:

And so, may you understand what amazing salvation God has offered us: by believing in Jesus, we become God's children.

May you grow in seeing yourself as God's child, so that your life may be full of reassurance of His love.

May you be marked by the noble responsibility of joining God in his Kingdom mission.

And may you live in the freedom and simplicity of depending on God as a humble little child.