

MONDAY 24 October 2022 "The Devil's Work?"

(1 John 3:7,8)

Good Monday morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Have you ever seen a young person who reminds you very much of one of their parents or maybe even a grandparent? Their mannerisms, their choice of words, perhaps how they dress or wear their hair. Perhaps they have followed in the very same vocation of their parent, maybe even continued a family business. Sometimes we call these people a 'chip off the old block' or some might say, 'he's just like his old man'. Did you know that is what Jesus was trying to accomplish with His disciples as they spent those years together? And guess what my friends, *if you have trusted Jesus to be your Savior, that's what Jesus is hoping will happen in your life and mine... that you and I will become like Jesus!* In fact, that's why the people in Antioch gave the Jesus followers the name "**Christians**". (Acts 11:26) So a fair question for all of us is this: *'As people watch me live my life and listen to what comes out of my mouth, do they think I am like Jesus?'*

Join me again with the apostle John as he's writing his short but very powerful first letter to Christians in the first century, scattered all across the Roman Empire. We believe John was probably writing from the great city of Ephesus. Yes, that is the city in which the apostle Paul and Timothy spent considerable time preaching the Gospel of Jesus. In that day, Ephesus was a huge city with people and religions from all over the world. It was also a great city of education, international commerce, and entertainment. As a result, vast numbers of people in Ephesus were not religious at all, they had no interest in God. So, for many people the question was this: *"Should an authentic Christian, a true follower of Jesus Christ, be distinguishable from other people simply by the way they act, the way they treat other people, the way they do business? Should their public and family reputation be so honorable that people who watch them would conclude they are followers of Jesus?"* Now, no matter where you are in the world today in 2022, look around your city. Can you distinguish true Christians by just watching them live their normal life?

John spreads out his parchment on the table and picks up his stylus again to continue writing his third chapter: ***"Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."*** (1 John 3:7-10) John sets down his stylus, pulls on his beard a bit while he reads the words over and over to be sure they are exactly what his mind and heart has heard from the Holy Spirit as he writes.

If you listen closely, you'll hear John groaning a bit as he ponders the weight of this paragraph and how significant it will be for people to understand its truth.

Many Bible scholars believe John's frequent use of the words "Dear children" suggest John may have written this letter very late in his life. (2:1; 2:18; 2:28; 3:7) Some believe John may have been the only apostle still living, perhaps writing as late as 85 or 90ad. You'll remember the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem in 70ad including total demolition of the great Jewish Temple. Many scholars believe John had remained in Jerusalem for a while after the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, helping to establish the Jesus movement there. You'll recall Jesus had entrusted His mother Mary to John. We presume Mary would have preferred returning to the familiar and rural region of Galilee rather than remain too long in the big city of Jerusalem with all the horrible memories of what had been done to Jesus there. But we have no Biblical record of exactly where John spent his years. Several early church historians give us references to John in Ephesus during the years of his older adult life. It's clear John felt a strong responsibility to teach and write the truth about Jesus and call all who would hear him to become faithful followers of Jesus, as John was.

John strongly felt that their lifestyles, their reputations, should actually proclaim Jesus even louder than their words. "The person who does what is right is righteous even as Jesus is righteous." (1 John 3:8) In other words, the words, attitudes, choices, and actions of an authentic Christian should be seen as a true reflection of Jesus. Why? *Because the Holy Spirit of God should be alive and working in the life of any authentic Christian just as the Holy Spirit was alive and guiding the words, attitudes and actions of Jesus.* Now ponder that for a moment friends! Yes, the word "**righteous**" can mean 'holy' or 'pure' or 'without any sin'; but it can also mean 'God honoring', 'morally and ethically right'. I believe that is what John is challenging us with here. *When Jesus was here living His life among normal, sinful human beings, Jesus ALWAYS did what was God honoring, what was morally and ethically right.* His disciples spent several years with Jesus watching and listening very carefully to learn how to be led by the Holy Spirit so they could do the same... **live rightly.**

That is what John is talking about here. John is NOT saying authentic Christians will become perfect people. *John IS saying authentic Christians will live God honoring lives as Jesus did. So once again, John is giving us a litmus test opportunity to look at our lives if we claim to be a Christian.* How similar or different is our vocabulary, the tone of our voice when we speak, our attitudes, our choices, our relationships, our actions as compared to how Jesus lived? **That similarity or difference is a very clear indication of the authenticity of our relationship with Jesus, regardless of what we claim!** Now ponder that deeply my friends, and what does it say about you and me?

John has a very clear and graphic way of speaking and writing, he doesn't sugar coat things, does he? Clearly it troubled John when he observed some people who claimed to be Christians, followers of Jesus, but they were very inconsistent, even hypocritical in their lifestyles, and they had bad reputations.

John knew the lifestyles of these people really confused the other people in Ephesus who had no relationship with God, but they had some interest in knowing more about Jesus, the Jesus Paul and Timothy and John spoke of. So, John wrote: "**The person who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.**" (1 John 3:8) Whenever John wrote this phrase, "***the Son of God appeared***" John was again declaring with great joy and conviction that he was an eyewitness! John cherished the memories he had with Jesus, hundreds of them! Jesus and John had developed a very close personal friendship and oh how John wished the people of Ephesus could develop that kind of relationship with Jesus like he had. May I ask, is that your desire too? Would you like a friendship with Jesus like John had?

I love it when the Bible makes it clear WHY Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth, and here John joins the chorus. "**The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.**" As you and I look around our city, our part of the world, what would you say is the evidence of '***the devil's work***' where you live? It's addiction and abusive relationships and broken families and corrupt governments, do you agree? It's dishonest business and life destroying health care and mind distorting education, do you agree? ***And how does Jesus destroy this work of the devil in every society in the world?*** One person, one life, one marriage, one family at a time, as we yield our lives to Jesus and His power sets us free from the devil's work. Now... let's pause right here and I urge you to take a close look... ***what is 'the devil's work' where you live and how is the power of Jesus working to destroy it?*** And this last question... how is God involving you and me in this great work? Are we part of the destructive '***devil's work***' in our city or are you and I an active part of the power of Jesus flowing through His people to destroy the devil's work? And here's a song to help us ponder this, my friends. . .

Today's Scripture is 1 John 3:7, 8.