

TELLTALE SIGNS

Scripture Reading: Read 1 John 3

The third chapter of John's first epistle opens with a marvelous declaration: *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"* And there's more coming. Just check out verse 2: *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."* When you take the time to reflect on these truths more fully, they are overwhelming. The Father did not dispense his love stingily. He lavished it on us. We are no longer his enemies, at war with the king of the universe. Nor are we pitiful slaves, redeemed from sin's penalty but excluded from God's family and reduced to mere servitude. Instead, we are now God's children, members of his household.

This new standing in Christ is to have a corresponding effect in the way we live our lives (3:3). Declaration of truth must move to its validation in our lives. Over time, there will be telltale signs in a believer's life that he or she really is one of God's kids. The family resemblance will become apparent according to John in two main areas: *"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."*

Before coming to Christ, we were serving Satan and following his ways (3:8). Jesus came to pay the price for our sins (2:2) and to destroy the devil's work (3:8). At the time of our salvation, God placed his seed in us (3:9), his "DNA" so to speak. Those who receive this seed can no longer knowingly, willingly, persistently and unrepentantly walk in sin (3:6, 9) since God's Spirit is reproducing God's holiness in us. So, if we claim to know Christ and, yet, don't do what is right, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1:6; 2:3-4). Obedience to God and a lifestyle that is pleasing to him is a telltale sign that we are God's children (2:5-6).

A second telltale sign, according to John, is that we love one another. In fact, John goes so far as to say, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."* Notice that for John, key evidence that we're in the kingdom is not how much theology we know (although doctrine is important), how often we go to church, read the Bible or pray (although all three are to be regularly practiced), and/or how much we give to God or share our faith (although we are commanded to give and witness.) No, the key evidence that we have passed from death to life is that we love one another!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Salvation is received only by faith in Christ but once we become God's child we will show the family resemblance over time. Are the telltale signs of obedience and love found in your life? If not, why not? Is it possible that you may never have been converted to Christ in the first place? If so, then today is the day to open your heart to Christ and to invite him in.

Take-a-way: *It's not just what you say but whether you love and obey that confirms you're God's child.*