



we now enjoy. But if we hope to be **“like Him”** in the age to come it must start here. It is this choice made in the present age that determines our true kinship to Him. John explains, **“In this the children of God and the children of the**

devil are manifest” (1 John 3:10a). There is confidence that comes as we imitate our Master, trusting in His mercy and relying on His sacrifice on our behalf. There is no confidence that rests in sin—**“Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother”** (1 John 3:10b).

But it also means when He comes in judgment **“we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”** (1 John 3:2b). That doesn’t mean we will be gods, but what a blessed promise that in the age to come we shall share more of His likeness than



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Faithful Sayings

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Confidence in Christ

By Kyle Pope

A prominent theme in religious teaching is confidence. In an uncertain world religious teachers offer their listeners confidence. What does the future hold? Will God shield us from hardship? Are we confident in our salvation? How may we be certain in the face of uncertainty? The Bible has much to say about confidence, but does it match what the religious world teaches on the subject?

John’s first epistle is an affirmation of confidence. John writes, **“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”** (1 John 2:28, NKJV). One day Christ will appear when He comes again for judgment. The Hebrew writer, after speaking of the inevitability that all must **“die once, but after this the judgment”** (Heb. 9:27) promises, **“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation”** (Heb. 9:28b). John

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 9:30 AM
 10:30 AM
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is talking about Jesus appearing for judgment. He promises a way we need not **“be ashamed before Him”** but confident. How? Three words: **“abide in Him.”** John devotes the words that follow this promise to an explanation of what this means.

Part of what it means to **“abide in Him”** means acting like Jesus. Since **“He is righteous”** the one who is truly **“born of Him”** is one who **“practices righteousness”** (1 John 2:29).

Here is where the world’s view of confidence misses it. The world says even if we sin, even if we don’t do right, even if we don’t live like Christ in God’s grace we may be confident. Clearly, **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23), and victory over sin rests in Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf, not any good deeds we can do. John explains that, **“He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin”** (1 John 3:5). But John offers no confidence to the soul who continues in sin. Instead, he writes, **“Whoever abides in Him does not sin”** (1 John 3:7a). In fact, **“Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him”** (1 John 3:7b).

To some this doesn’t seem like much of a reason for confidence! Is John teaching that we can only have confidence if we are flawless? No! At the beginning of this chapter John explained, **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2:1). John acknowledges that Christians may

sin, but he is urging them to live in such a way that they **“may not sin.”** When the Christian sins John teaches, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”** (1 John 1:9).

John is setting down definitions. **“Whoever has been born of God does not sin”** (1 John 3:9a)—**“He who sins is of the devil”** (1 John 3:8a). By definition a child of God does not sin. Not because it is impossible for him to sin (as we have already seen), nor because he never stumbles into sin. He **“does not sin”** because so long as **“His seed [that is Christ’s word] remains in him”** it will influence his life in such a way that **“he cannot sin.”** So long as we allow the word of God to abide in us we will not sin.

John is teaching confidence but he also wants the reader to avoid deception. There is a danger of self-deception. John writes, **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”** (1 John 1:8). We must acknowledge our weakness and confess sin when it comes into our lives. But we must also avoid deception from those who would offer a false confidence. He writes, **“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as**

He is righteous” (1 John 3:7). It is a deception to imagine that we **“abide in Him”** while we abide in sin. The child of God will never attain flawlessness, but he must live in a lifelong effort to live like our Savior—**“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked”** (1 John 2:6).

Being counted as **“children of God”** is an immeasurable **“manner of love”** that God has **“bestowed on us”** (1 John 3:1a). But being a child of God means some things. First, it means that, **“the world does not know us, because it did not know Him”** (1 John 3:1b). How foolish to imagine that we can live like those of the world and think we are children of God!