GOD IS THE STANDARD by Rick Liggin

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called the children of God; and such we are” (1 Jn. 3:1)! Wow! The fact that God calls us His children is a really big deal! It forces us to see how much God the Father loves us. But it’s more than just that God “calls” us His children. Our text affirms “and such we are”—we actually *are* the children of God—and this just amplifies even more how much God loves us! Again, all I know to say about that is, “Wow!”

But our text goes on to say, “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (3:2). All we know about our future existence with God in eternity is that in some way “we will be like Him.” And that, too, is an amazing thought…an amazing thought that ought to impact the way we live our lives now on earth. Our text essentially makes this point, “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, *just as He is pure*” (3:3). If our hope truly is set on being with God and being like God in eternity, then we will be people who consistently and constantly sweep sin out of our lives; we will be people who work hard at being pure and staying pure just as our Father is pure.

These facts rightly considered move us closer to the point of this article, because the next thing we read in our text is, “And everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (3:4). The original word translated “lawlessness” here literally means to behave or act “without law.” And so, according to our text, sin is an action that is “against” or “outside” of *the law* (3:4). Now it is important to note that this verse tells us what sin is in a practical sense, but it does not strictly give us a definition of the original word for “sin.” In the original language of the New Testament, the word “sin” literally means “to miss the mark.” It’s as if we are aiming at some “mark” or “target,” but we miss the “mark” or fall short of our “target.” Now, if the word “sin” means “to miss the mark,” then we can’t help but ask, “What is the mark (target) that we miss?" And right here is where it really gets interesting to me!

The Roman letter tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). So what is the “mark” we have missed or the “target” we have fallen short of when we sin? This text makes it clear that the mark or target is “the glory of God”! What we are supposed to be aiming at is the glory of God. When we sin, we miss or fall short of that mark! If “sin” in a practical sense “is lawlessness,” then the *law* of God is not simply a list of arbitrary or capricious rules, a burden to be borne. Rather, God’s law is a reflection of His glory. If sin is “lawlessness” that falls short of the glory of God, then the law must somehow reflect and express the glory of God! And so, in refusing sin and choosing rather to practice righteousness, one chooses to reflect the image of God! What this says is that God Himself is the standard of what is right and lawful. God says, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). In a similar way, His Son teaches us, “You are to be perfect, as you heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). And the apostle Paul urges us to “be imitators of God, as beloved children.” God Himself is the standard! Sin is everything that God is not; and to reach out for sin is to assault the nature of God and to assault God Himself.

And so, if our hope is actually “fixed” on God—if we truly hope to see Him as He is and be like Him—then most certainly we will keep on sweeping sin out of our lives; we will purify ourselves “just as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3). Is it truly your hope to see Him as is and to be like Him?

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