

“Characteristics of a Child of God – Part 2”

8 September 2019

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Let Your Light Shine Before Men - Matthew 5:16 - 123RF Photo - Used under license

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." (1 John 5:1)

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16)

This lesson is the third lesson in the series, "The Children of God" (Ref. 1, Ref. 2). This lesson is the second of two lessons on the Characteristics of a

Child of God (Ref. 2). To learn more about "Becoming a Child of God," please review Ref. 1.

Consider. If someone asked you to describe the characteristics of a child of God, what would you say?

A child of God illumines others with the light of Christ. Jesus Christ himself is the light of the world (John 1:9, John 8:12). When Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14), Jesus described their (our) role to shine with his light, the light of Christ, upon the world. The light of Christ that we shine enlightens people and leads them to salvation and eternal life. When we are a child of God, we share the light of Christ upon the world effectively because the Holy Spirit indwells us and empowers us (John 14:16-17, Acts 1:8, Ref. 3).

A child of God should have the proper motive in doing good works. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and *glorify your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16, italics added). We are to avoid doing good deeds for ostentatious ("look at me") purposes. Jesus criticized people who do good works to bring praise to themselves rather than to God (Matthew 6:1-6). Our motive as a child of God should always be to glorify God, not ourselves.

A child of God must love all people.

- *Mankind at large* - God sets the example of whom we are to love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- *Brothers and sisters in Christ* - "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not *love his brother*" (1 John 3:10, italics added). "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father *loves the child born of Him*" (1 John 5:1, italics added).

- *Neighbors* - Jesus said, "You shall love your *neighbor* as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, italics added).
- *Enemies* - Jesus said, "Love your *enemies* and pray for *those who persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44, italics added).

The Greek word for love in these verses above is *agapaó*, which means *to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of* (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Ref. 4).

A child of God has the witness of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul writes, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). The Greek word for *bears witness with* is *summartureó* which means *to testify jointly, i.e. corroborate by (concurrent) evidence* (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Ref. 5). When we are born of God, the Holy Spirit jointly testifies with our human spirit that God is our heavenly Father and that we are his child (Romans 8:15, Ref. 6 below).

A child of God should be alert (watchful) and sober (free from illusion). The Apostle Paul begins 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 with "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). Then Paul says, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all *sons of light and sons of day ...*" (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, italics added).

Paul then states a characteristic of children of God, "so then *let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober*" (1 Thessalonians 5:6, italics added.) As a child of God:

- *We should not be indifferent (asleep) to spiritual things as are many in the world*
- *We should be alert* - The Greek word is *grégoreó* which means (literally) "*stay awake*"; (figuratively) *be vigilant (responsible, watchful)* (HELPS Word-studies, Ref. 7).

- *We should be sober* - The Greek word is *néphó*. *Néphó* means *sober (not drunk), free from illusion, having clear judgment, and self-controlled* (HELPS Word-studies, Ref. 8).

Apply. In self-examination, consider each of the characteristics of a child of God covered in this lesson.

- Are you illuminating others with the light of Christ?
- Are you doing good works to glorify God rather than yourself?
- Do you love all people including your brothers and sisters in Christ, your neighbors, and your enemies?
- Do you know for certain that God is your heavenly Father and that you are his child?
- Do you have clear judgment about spiritual things?

Pray and thank God for helping you to demonstrate these characteristics of a child of God. In the areas where you are uncertain, ask God to help, strengthen, and encourage you.

In the next, and final, lesson in this series, we will discuss the nature and benefits of our adoption as children of God.

References

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