

REVIEW OF 1 JOHN 1:1ff

Thematic Statement: Boldness at the *Bēma* Requires Abiding in Him (2:28)

Arrangement of the Body of the Epistle:

Theme Announced (2:28)

Body (2:29–4:16)

Theme Realized (4:17-19)

The Manifestation of the Children of God (2:29–3:10a)

Only children of God do righteousness, based upon the fact that Christ is righteous (but humanity is unrighteous) (2:29)

Most interpreters treat this verse as if it said:

~~All believers do righteousness, so those not doing righteousness are unbelievers.~~

~~All dogs are mammals, so dogs are the only mammals.~~

Does this verse affirm that **all believers** or **only believers** do righteousness?

God bestowed such a great love upon us [apostles and upon you readers] that we [apostles and you reader should be called children of God] (3:1a)

The words “and we are” in 3:1a, though true, are not part of the Majority Text.

Based upon [the fact that the apostles and the readers are God’s children] the world does not recognize the readers [as God’s children], because it did not recognize Jesus Christ [as God’s Son] (3:1b)

Is it easier to recognize a sinless one as God’s Son?

Or is it easier to recognize sinful believers as God’s children?

Since the world did not recognize Him, how could they recognize us?

We apostles [& you readers] are God’s children, but what we [apostles and you readers] shall be [in glorified bodies] has not yet been made manifest (3:2a)

We [apostles & you readers] know that we [apostles & you readers] will be like He is [NOW] when He is made manifest, because [apostles & you readers] shall see Him [THEN] as He is [NOW] (3:2b)

My discussion of the word *manifest* appears at the very end of the notes.

Every one possessing the expectation [of being made like Jesus is NOW, based on His promise] is thereby purified, just as He is pure (3:3)

What does he mean by purifies himself?

A person taking a shower is said to have cleansed himself/herself.

However, was it not the soap and water that did the cleansing?

Similarly, our belief in Christ results in us being cleansed, but it is Christ is who does the cleansing (cf. 1 John 1:7)

Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, because sin = lawlessness (3:4)

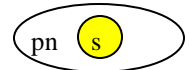
There is a grammatical basis for rendering *is* as *equals* in 3:4b. This particular construction is rare in the NT, so the word *is* can only rarely be understood as equals. The following will clarify how English and Greek differ.

English depends upon word order to distinguish a subject from a predicate nominative. Greek does not do this through word order, but by the presence or absence of an article (the). If only one Greek word in a sentence with a predicate nominative has an article (the), the word with an article is the subject. Italics will represent hyper-literal translations of Greek. Underlining signals the subject (which has an article in Gk) Non-italic represents a good English translation:

The boys are people.

People are the boys.

The boys are people.



In this (common) construction, in which only one article (the) appears in Greek, it means that the subject is a subset of the predicate nominative. Yes, boys are people, they are not the only ones that are people. Girls are people, women are people, and men are people.

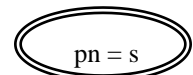
1 John 3:4b has unusual Greek grammar. Both words have an article (the). When this happens, either word can be the subject. When either word can be the subject, the subject equals the predicate nominative. I will use a non-theological illustration:

The twelve is the dozen.

The dozen is the twelve.

The twelve is the dozen.

The dozen is the twelve.

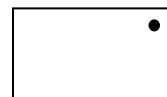


Since sin equals lawlessness, doing a sin equals doing lawlessness.

English translations err in suggesting that John only calls continuing to sin lawlessness. He calls even a solitary sin *lawlessness* (Remember 1 John 1:8 and 1:10).

Why do English translations use the phrase *practices sin* (conveying the wrong idea)?

They do so, because they think that is the solution to verse 6. However, their so-called solution to 3:6 runs afoul of 1 John 1:8 and 1:10, as my illustration shows:



The readers already knew (1) that Jesus Christ was manifested to take away the sins of the apostles [and of believers and of the whole world (cf. 2:2)] and (2) that there is no sin in Jesus Christ (3:5)

Cf. 1 John 1:5. In this context, does the normal “solution” for 3:4 make any sense? If Jesus has no sin and was manifested to take away sin, is it logical to expect for John to take issue only with the idea of continued practice of sin in 3:4? No! He is aiming at any sin, not just at continued sinning. Note also 3:3.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin [while abiding in Him]. (3:6a)

Whoever sins neither has come to see Him nor has come to know Him (3:6b)

They must not be deceived, doing righteousness [e.g., things that the Bible says are pleasing to God] is [only] done by one who is righteous (a believer); just as He [our righteous God] is righteous (3:7)

[A believer] who sins is of the devil [not of God], for the devil has sinned since his beginning (3:8a)

When a believer sins, it is **not** a manifestation of who he/she is.

When an unbeliever sins, it **truly** is a manifestation of who he/she is.

The NIV's handling of 3:10b is all wrong. Though the NIV is literal here, their handling of 3:10b says how they misunderstand 3:8a.

[The reason sin is so contrary to who we are as believers is that] God's Son [Jesus] was manifested to destroy the works of the devil [notably, sin] (3:8b)

The one who [specifically, that regenerate seed that is now the core of the believer's being] is born of God does not sin, because His seed abides in him and he/it [the seed] cannot sin, for he/it [the seed] has been born of God (3:9)

Remember John 1:11-13;

Romans 7:20-22;

2 Corinthians 4:16;

Ephesians 3:16;

James 1:17-21.

In this [(2:29-3:9) the truth that only believers can do righteousness—based on the presence of God’s regenerate seed being implanted within us—that doing of righteousness (the things that Scripture says are pleasing to God) is how children of God [can] manifest who we are (3:10a)

When believers sin, they are not manifesting who they are, but they remain God’s children (cf. 3:1, that is within the context of 2:29-3:10a)

Thus, believers do not always manifest who we are.

Believers do sin, but sin complicates the sharing of the message of life, because the world did not even perceive that Jesus is the Son of God with a message for them. How much harder it is for the world to perceive that we are children of God with a message from God for them

When unbelievers sin [they never do anything that pleases God; they always do that which is sinful and displeasing to God] they manifest who they are

CONCLUSION

Manifest (*phaneroō* or *phaneros*) are key words of this section.

2²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He is **manifest**, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

3² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been **manifested** what we shall be, but we know that when He is **manifested**, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

3⁵ And you know that He was **manifested** to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

3⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was **manifested**, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

3¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are **manifest**: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.