

**1 John 3:1-7**

*Dear Heavenly Father, send us your Holy Spirit so that we may live as your righteous children, for the sake of our righteous Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

How many of you would admit that you're a 'chip off the old block'?

How many of you, when you were young, swore that you would never grow up to be like your mum or dad? There was no way you wanted to develop the traits and habits they had that infuriated you! Yet as you grow older, you notice just how like your parents you have become, both to your pleasure, but sometimes also to your horror!

Whether we like it or not, we have all inherited our parent's genes and learned many of their habits – both good and bad. We are all 'chips off the old block'.

But we are also children of God.

Since you are children of God, how much are you like God? How much of his nature have you received?

Now, looking at you, you don't look like God. You don't think like God. You don't even act like God, well, maybe some of you do, but it's not usually like the God we've come to know in Jesus.

Also, if you were to walk down the street, would people point to you and say, 'look, there goes a child of God'? I doubt it. Even if you were to look at yourself in the mirror, would you see a child of God looking back at you?

Yet, despite what you and others see when they look at you, you are children of God.

Now, you're not children of God by natural descent, because you were made children of God through unnatural means. You weren't born of God in a womb, but in a tomb. You were reborn as children of God through baptism into the death of Christ. Not only that, but you were also born into his resurrection. Through the drowning of your baptism, you were reborn as a child of God.

This seems almost ludicrous: that you can become children of God through a splash of water and by speaking God's holy name, yet you accept this almost unbelievable promise by faith. By faith, you accept that you are in fact children of God.

Now, if you were to rely only on your experience, then of course you don't feel like a child of God, you don't act like a child of God, and you don't look like a child of God. But by faith, you accept that you are a child of God. You accept that God is slowly changing you to be like him and to be a 'chip off the old block'.

Even though you're fully a child of God, the process of becoming a child of God continues. Like a potter with a lump of clay, God constantly moulds you into his likeness. He is slowly transforming you into his image, slowly reshaping you, slowly chipping away at the stubborn lumps and making the rough parts smooth. He's constantly removing your guilt and shame, cleaning you and making you whole again.

The end product of this shaping isn't clear to you yet, but when Jesus comes, you'll see how you've become like him. When he comes and reveals his true nature to all people, triumphant in his glory, you'll see how you've been made in his own image. You wait in faith to see what you've already become and what you're still becoming.

But, if you are all children of God, then this has a practical impact on your life right now.

You see, children of God don't sin.

Yet how many of you can say you don't sin?

So, since none of us can say we don't sin, we've got a problem.

If children of God don't sin, yet we sin, does this mean we're not really children of God?

Well no, the author of our text isn't saying that, for only last week we heard him say that anyone who considers themselves to be without sin is deceiving themselves.

So, what does he mean when he says that no one who lives in Jesus keeps sinning?

Well, he would know by nature we're sinful, rebellious and stubborn people. The sickness of sin fills all our pores and distorts everything we do. In this way we're very much like the children of Adam and Eve. We share their nature – that same sinful,

rebellious nature. We're chips of their old block and share their sinful nature, so therefore it's impossible not to sin.

But, to remain in our sinning ways, to live in sin, or to purposely keep on sinning, isn't compatible with us being children of God. To remain rebellious, stubborn, proud and sinful is totally irreconcilable with being children of God.

Children of God should do what is right. We should be righteous, just as God is righteous. Our ways should be pure because we should be walking the right paths. To be otherwise, is to rebel against our heavenly Father.

Now sometimes parents feel like disowning rebellious children. They do this because their children don't seem to share the same nature as their parents and in fact tarnish and defile the reputation of the parents by their behaviour.

So if we purposely remain in our sinful ways and still claim to be children of God, what does this tell others about God? Even though God doesn't become less holy by our actions, in other people's eyes he is defiled by our behaviour. When we act unfairly and gossip behind people's backs and hurt each other with words and actions, in other people's eyes this behaviour reflects on God. When we don't show respect or care or compassion, this behaviour reflects on God.

Yet if God is holy and we don't live as children of a holy God, then just like a rebellious child shows a broken relationship with his loving parents, so we also show a broken relationship with God. We may even end up convincing ourselves, and others, that we're not children of God simply because we don't show this by the way we act.

Some have said before that the only difference between believers and non-believers is that believers are forgiven. In a sense this is true, but this isn't the whole picture. A child of God will act like a child of God.

So therefore we shouldn't deceive ourselves about sin. Sure, we're forgiven, but that's no excuse to do what we like. Just because we're children of God, it doesn't mean we're all of a sudden outside of the law. We don't become lawless just because we're God's children.

In fact, since God is slowly transforming us into his image, we do our best to not remain in sin.

Sure, the inevitable will happen, and we will sin again. But just like a loving parent is always ready to forgive and welcome back a child who tries his or her best to please their parents, how much more will God do the same, knowing he is more patient and more loving than even our own parents.

God is always ready to forgive, and will readily forgive every child who eagerly tries to please him. God shows us his undeserving grace time and time again, forgiving us. We, as children of God may wish to live in accordance with such an honour, or we can continue to rebel against him by acting as if we're not his children.

So, since you're all children of God, allow God to make you a chip off the 'old block'. Although you're fully children of God, this process of you living like his child isn't finished. By the power of the Holy Spirit who works through his Word and Sacraments, allow God to shape you, lead you, and guide you as his beloved children. Seek to live a righteous life as a child of a righteous God.

Then, if you're able to live as a righteous child of God, understand this is totally through God's grace. It's God's transforming and renewing ways that enable you to live as his precious child. As he transforms you into his image, you can please him because he has breathed his nature into you in the first place.

If you're struggling to live as his holy child, then keep looking to him in faith so that, despite what you see in the mirror, despite your temptations, and despite your past, you'll trust he'll continue to love you and slowly transform you to be just like him.

Then, when Jesus comes again, you'll all see that you are like him; children of God, who share his nature and his glory.

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, live as children of God as you surely are. Be a chip of the good old block.

*May the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*