

① **【We are children of God】**

Consider how much the Father loves us, that we should be called children of God—and that is what we are! (1 John 3:1) Here John tells us that we are loved by God the Father so much that we are called children of God. Let us reflect on the fact that we are children of God.

● There is a fairy tale called “The Prince and the Pauper.” The story begins when a prince and a beggar, who happened to look exactly alike, swap their clothes and switch places. If we apply this to ourselves, we can understand: Christ, the Son of God, put on my filthy garments, became poor, and was counted among sinners. Conversely, I am clothed in the garments of Christ the Prince and begin to receive the treatment due a prince. Becoming a prince was not through my own strength or effort. I was unilaterally made a prince. That is baptism. Paul expresses this when he says, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Even though we are called children of God, we do not truly become children of God in the fullest sense. The true Son of God is Jesus alone—the divine Son who existed with God the Father before the creation of the world, eternally begotten by the Father, and thus called “the only begotten Son of God.” We have been united with that Christ and, by grace, made children of God. If you hear that you have been made a child of God and feel no joy or gratitude whatsoever, it is because you have never suffered for your own sins. If someone inherits their parents' fortune without any hardship and suddenly becomes wealthy, they feel no real sense of it and do not cherish the wealth given to them. Only those who have toiled and sweated to finally attain their present position can truly be thankful. Therefore, only sinners, criminals, those cast into the corners of this world, those who have truly caused trouble for others and wept over their own sins—only such people will leap for joy and give thanks when told, “You are a child of God.” In this sense, knowing one's own sin and suffering because of it is absolutely essential.

② **【We become like Christ】**

Beloved, we are already children of God, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is. (1 John 3:1) We are already children of God, yet we appear no different from the people of this world. We remain unchanged from the past, still sinning and lacking good works, so we do not look like children of God at all. However, we know that when Christ appears (at His second coming), we will be

transformed to be like Him. This is what Paul also repeatedly teaches. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18) “Christ will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” (Philippians 3:21)

The life of faith is not something that ends once we believe; it must involve growth, becoming more and more like Christ. Callistus Ware states, “Salvation is not a past, one-time event for those who receive it, but an ongoing process.” While Protestants speak of “faith alone,” believing alone is insufficient. Practice and growth are necessary. This is why the monastic life becomes essential. The latter part of Paul's letters is entirely about deeds. The Book of James declares, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17).

●Katsushika Hokusai was a ukiyo-e artist of the late Edo period. He produced some 30,000 works during his 90-year life and is also known for his free-spirited existence, moving 93 times and using over 30 different artist names. In the afterword at the end of his “One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji,” he spoke for the first time about his life thus far and his resolve for the future. In summary: “I began drawing at age six and started publishing various works around fifty, but the paintings I created before seventy were insignificant. At seventy-three, I began to understand the skeletal structures of birds, beasts, insects, and fish, as well as how plants grow. By eighty, I will grasp these principles more deeply, and by ninety, I should be able to discern their profound secrets. At 100, I will know a world beyond them, and at 110, I will be able to paint each stroke as if it were alive. God of Longevity, I hope you will witness that my words are not false.”

His drive to grow as an artist is truly remarkable. Today's Christians often lack that passion to become like Christ!

Now, what's interesting is the phrase, “For then we shall see him as he is.” For Gnostic Christianity, resurrection occurs spiritually (intellectually) in this world the moment one believes in Christ; there is no bodily resurrection. Of course, there is no physical Second Coming either. Therefore, “seeing the Son as he is” means that when one sees Christ returning in his glorified body, one realizes, “Ah, I too will be transformed into such a body.”

③ **【Do you have faith that awaits the Second Coming of Christ?】**

“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” (1 John 3:3) Those who place their hope in their bodies eventually becoming glorious bodies do not live in debauchery, but prepare themselves through self-control. We must not imagine the future from this world, but see the present from the future proclaimed by God's word. This is the “faith in the Second Coming.” People today do not prepare for the future. When they speak of preparation, they think only of

accumulating worldly possessions, yet no matter how much they hoard things they cannot take into God's kingdom, it is meaningless. I believe modern Christians have a weak faith in awaiting the Second Coming. An old man once harshly told my foreign friend, "Go back to your country quickly!" How foolish, I think, that an old man, with only a little time left in his life, could prepare nothing but a corrupted soul throughout his entire life. This is not someone else's problem. Are you preparing for Christ's Second Coming?

④ **【He who is born of God does not sin】**

"Whoever remains in the Son does not sin." (1 John 3:2) and "Whoever is born of God does not sin, for God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:2) repeatedly state that the children of God do not sin. Here, sin refers to denying Jesus Christ. Just as a human born of parents inherits their seed, their genes, so too does one born of God inherit God's seed. This is profoundly real and physical. Split a seed in two, and you find a part called the embryo at its center. Within it lies the program that determines the future form and shape, guiding growth accordingly. God's seed is within us. We will surely become like Christ.

● There is an account concerning the final moments of the fourth-century master Sisoës.

"On his deathbed, Master Sisoës' face began to shine like the sun. He cried out, 'Behold, Master Anthony is coming.' Then, 'Behold, a multitude of apostles is coming.' His face grew ever brighter. Then he appeared to be speaking to someone. The disciples gathered around him and asked with whom he was conversing. 'The angels have come to take me, and I asked them for a little more time. Just a little more time to repent,' he answered. The disciples were astonished and said, 'Father, surely you no longer need repentance!' He answered, 'Truthfully, I myself doubt whether I have even begun to repent until this very moment.' At that instant, the light emanating from his face grew even brighter, and the disciples were filled with awe. 'Behold, the Lord is coming!' Master Sisoë cried out and breathed his last.

Master Sisoë had unknowingly formed an image of Christ within himself. At the hour of death, called by Christ outside, the outer God and the inner God resonated and shone, drawn together like iron and magnet. "The kingdom of God is like this: A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how." (Mark 4:26-27) May Christ within us be magnified at the end of our lives. Ah, what a joyful prospect!