

Born of God

An Exposition of I John

I John 2:8-18

Scriptures

I John 2:8

John 15:13

Romans 12:1

I John 2:9

I John 3:14

I John 2:10

I John 4:8

Romans 13:10

I John 4:17

I John 2:11

Proverbs 4:19

Matthew 6:23

II Corinthians 11:14

I John 2:12-14

I John 2:20

I John 2:15

James 4:4

I John 2:16

Job 33:14-17

Romans 8:6

I John 2:17

I John 2:18

I John 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

NEW commandment.

Though Scripture previously spoke of love, it was not fully manifested nor could it be truly comprehended until the coming of God's only-begotten Son.

The commandment is new because it is based on a higher and more sacrificial love that led Christ to lay down His life for the unsaved and ungodly.

It was this extension and depth of love, by which Jesus would be willing to die for the sins of others, that reveals the true essence of divine love.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus laid down His life not for family but sinners. One could perhaps fathom dying for those we have blood relationship with, such as children and other close family relatives, yet Jesus died for the ungodly: those who were themselves strangers to God, and had previously set aside God's laws.

Life is the most precious thing a man has. In fact, it is all he really has, and is his most precious possession. To give life up is to give up all. It is this standard of what true love is, that Jesus revealed to the world.

True love, therefore, is to not only to be willing to lose our life to God, but ultimately to actually do it.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

This depth of love, is also what true Christians should follow. To lose our life to both serve God, and the people of God.

Born of God

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 2:8

Which thing is true in him—In the Lord Jesus. That is, which commandment or law of love was illustrated in him, or was manifested by him in his contact with his disciples. That which was most prominent in him was this very love which he enjoined on all his followers.

The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

The light that now shines, is in reference to Jesus Christ and the love of God He manifested to the world. This divine light can still be felt today in those who have been given Christ's own nature in the form of the Holy Spirit.

When a man is baptized by Jesus Christ and filled with the His Spirit, then a portion of Christ's own love can be seen in the world. By God in Christ living in the saved, the light of Christ, and the love of God, is still manifested in a world of darkness.

I John 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

No man who truly abides in the light, by also abiding in Christ and His love, *hateth his brother*. Hate blinds; it does not enlighten.

Hate is a characteristic of the devil, and it has no place, nor will be given any room, in those truly born of God.

Therefore, if hate resides in a man's heart, regardless of his religious profession, then we should know that there is no true light in him.

Where hate is, light cannot exist. Thus, even if a man professes to be a Christian, if he hates the very ones Christ has commanded him to love, then it is certain that he remains completely estranged from the Son of God, and is living in darkness.

Ultimately, where darkness is, hate will thrive. But where true light is, it cannot. Never then believe any who claim themselves a true Christian, if hate is what rules their soul, and a hard heart is what controls them.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 2:9

And hateth his brother—The word "brother" seems here to refer to those who professed the same religion. The word is indeed sometimes used in a larger sense, but the reference here appears to be to that which is properly brotherly love among Christians. Compare Lucke, in loc.

Is in darkness even until now—That is, he cannot have true religion unless he has love to the brethren. The command to love one another was one of the most solemn and earnest which Christ ever enjoined, John 15:17; he made it the special badge of discipleship, or that by which his followers were to be everywhere known, John 13:35; and it is, therefore, impossible to have any true religion without love to those who are sincerely and truly his followers. If a man has not that, he is in deep darkness, whatever else he may have, on the whole subject of religion. ...1 Thessalonians 4:9. [*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*]

In the true Christian religion, there is no substitute for love. It is heralded as the greatest, even among faith and hope. Love is what God is, and none can claim true relationship with Him who do not possess His love. Hence, neither wisdom, nor stature, nor position, nor religious importance can take the place of the only true mark of belonging to Christ.

Love led Jesus' earthly ministry, and all who are called to heaven through Him will manifest this same love. Because of their proximity to the Master, those saved by the Son of God will manifest the same love as the Son of God.

Hence, only by possessing love can we know that a man has passed from death unto life, even as by love we can also know if we ourselves have passed from death unto life.

The standard, therefore, by which a man can know if he is saved or not, is by if the love of God truly abides within him. It is the manifestation of love that proves that eternal life has been given, and a true child of God produced.

I John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

I John 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

When a man loves his brother with sincerity and genuineness, then he certainly abides in God's light and is a true child of God.

God is love, and there is not anyone who truly abides in Him who does not walk in His love.

Since love is what constitutes God's own nature, then men are foolish to believe that they have any true connection to the Lord if they lack the very essence of His own being.

Hence, if love is absent in a man, then we can be sure that he possesses no true knowledge of God at all. As the foundation of all true spiritual knowledge, is the possession of love. If a man knows not the divine love of God, and is not governed by it, then he is not a Christian, and still remains separated from the higher heavenly realm of God.

I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

None occasion of stumbling in him.

If a man truly loves both God and those born of Him, then little in life will cause him to stumble.

By pursuing love, sin is avoided, and no real harm can be done to our neighbor.

Thus, he who truly loves will neither create a stumbling block to himself, nor present himself a stumbling block to other Christians.

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, *Rom. 13:10*
Fulfilling of the law.—The form of the Greek word implies not only that love helps a man to fulfil the law, but that in the fact of the presence of love in his heart the law is actually fulfilled.

So great is the divine commandment to walk in Christ's love that when men walk in it, and practice it daily, and pursue its expansion in their lives, then this fully fulfills God's will for their life.

Born of God

Love is the fulfillment of all of God's laws. Ultimately, where true love for God and His people resides, then neither God's will, nor His Word, shall be broken.

If love truly rules a man, forms his character, and is the underlying force behind all his decisions, then he will be filled with boldness at Christ's return. By pursuing Christ's love then, will all fear and trepidation at His coming be removed. For although others who did not love will have reason for fear, those who pursued love while living on this earth, will not.

1 John 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1 John 4:17

That we may have boldness in the day of judgment—By the influence of love in delivering us from the fear of the wrath to come, 1 John 4:18. The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgment, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm.

There is no fear in love.

Love's divine force drives out, not only the fear of man, but all fear of future judgment from the Lord as well.

The greatest shame also that the unsaved will have at Christ's judgment will be that they loved not God, but rather sin. That they loved not others, but only their own selves.

1 John 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

This truth the apostle states with undeniable clarity. That those who hate possess absolutely no affinity with light whatsoever, and as such can only walk and stumble in darkness.

Hence, not only do those who hate the brethren both live and walk in darkness, but also, as a further result of their sin, they have no true compass by which to govern their own lives.

Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

A wise and truly religious man can sin and see the error of his way, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit within him, but the wicked have no such light to reveal this error. Ultimately, hate so blinds a man's soul that all true ability to navigate properly in this life is lost.

The willful sinner is therefore blind not only to God and His Person, but also is equally blind as to how to properly live his own life.

Pulpit Commentary, Prov. 4:19

The expression, *they know not at what they stumble*, carries with it the idea that they are so ignorant that they neither know wickedness as wickedness, nor do they apprehend the destruction which it involves. "Sins, however great and detestable they may be, are looked

upon as trivial, or as not sins at all, when men get accustomed to them” (St. Augustine, ‘Enchiridion,’ cap. 80).

If evil is perceived as light, then darkness will encompass a man’s entire soul.

Matthew 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Vincent’s Word Studies, Matt. 6:23

“Seeing falsely is worse than blindness. A man who is too dim-sighted to discern the road from the ditch, may feel which is which; but if the ditch appears manifestly to him to be the road, and the road to be the ditch, what shall become of him? False seeing is unseeing, on the negative side of blindness” (Ruskin, “Modern Painters”).

II Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

With all deception, especially so in the spiritual realm, the illusion is given that those deceived, will believe they are walking in light, since men most in darkness often view themselves as the most enlightened men of all.

Thus, for darkness to operate and keep its influence in the world, it must portray itself as light. As very few would seek to live in darkness, if they could see its true nature.

The more also evil something or someone is, then the more they will try and deceive others that they are actually good. To determine, therefore, a man’s true character, we are instructed by Christ to examine the fruit in men’s lives and not merely the words they speak of God.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, II Cor. 11:14

For Satan himself is transformed . . . —That is, he who is an apostate angel; who is malignant and wicked; who is the prince of evil, assumes the appearance of a holy angel. Paul assumes this as an indisputable and admitted truth, without attempting to prove it, and without referring to any particular instances. Probably he had in his eye cases where Satan put on false and delusive appearances for the purpose of deceiving, or where he assumed the appearance of great sanctity and reverence for the authority of God. Such instances occurred in the temptation of our first parents Genesis 3:1–6, and in the temptation of the Saviour, Matthew 4. The phrase “an angel of light,” means a pure and holy angel, light being the emblem of purity and holiness. Such are all the angels that dwell in heaven; and the idea is, that Satan assumes such a form as to appear to be such an angel. Learn here:

(1) His power. He can assume such an aspect as he pleases. He can dissemble and appear to be eminently pious. He is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness; and it is the consummation of bad power for an individual to be able to assume any character which he pleases.

(2) His art. He is long practiced in deceitful arts. For six thousand years he has been practicing the art of delusion. And with him it is perfect.

(3) We are not to suppose that all that appears to be piety is piety. Some of the most plausible appearances of piety are assumed by Satan and his ministers. None ever professed a profounder regard for the authority of God than Satan did when he tempted the Saviour. And if the prince of wickedness can appear to be an angel of light, we are not

to be surprised if those who have the blackest hearts appear to be people of most eminent piety.

(4) We should be on our guard. We should not listen to suggestions merely because they appear to come from a pious man, nor because they seem to be prompted by a regard to the will of God. We may be always sure that, if we are to be tempted, it will be by someone having a great appearance of virtue and religion.

(5) We are not to expect that Satan will appear to man to be as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of pure wickedness; or black and abominable in his character; or full of evil and hateful. He would thus defeat himself. It is for this reason that wicked people do not believe that there is such a being as Satan. Though continually under his influence and “led captive by him at his will,” yet they neither see him nor the chains which lead them, nor are they willing to believe in the existence of the one or the other.

Understanding that Satan transforms himself as an angel of light, in an attempt to deceive the elect, then it is easy to see why those who are led by him think themselves as of the light.

I John 2:12–14 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. ¹³I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. ¹⁴I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Not only does the Holy Spirit convict believers of personal sin, but It also guides them to discern between light and darkness. Because the Holy Spirit is light, It both can and will detect and identify when darkness is only parading itself as light.

Discerning of spirits is also that spiritual ability and gift of the Spirit that enables those saved by the Son of God to detect not only the true workings of the Holy Spirit but also all other deceptive and erring spirits, which aim to lead men away from God, though they come in Christ’s name.

I John 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, I John 2:20

But ye have an unction from the Holy One—The apostle in this verse evidently intends to say that he had no apprehension in regard to those to whom he wrote that they would thus apostatize, and bring dishonor on their religion. They had been so anointed by the Holy Spirit that they understood the true nature of religion, and it might be confidently expected that they would persevere. The word “unction” or “anointing” (χρίσμα *chrisma*) means, properly, “something rubbed in or ointed;” oil for anointing, “ointment;” then it means an anointing. The allusion is to the anointing of kings and priests, or their inauguration or coronation, (1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 16:13; Exodus 28:41; Exodus 40:15; compare the notes at Matthew 1:1); and the idea seems to have been that the oil thus used was emblematic of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit as qualifying them for the discharge of the duties of their office. Christians, in the New Testament, are described as “kings and priests,” Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10, and as a “royal priesthood” 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9; and hence they are represented as “anointed,” or as endowed with those graces of the Spirit, of which anointing was the emblem. The phrase “the Holy One” refers here, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit whose influences are imparted to the people of God, to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort them in their trials. The particular reference here is

to the influences of that Spirit as giving them clear and just views of the nature of religion, and thus securing them from error and apostasy.

And ye know all things—That is, all things which it is essential that you should know on the subject of religion. See the John 16:13 note; 1 Corinthians 2:15 note. The meaning cannot be that they knew all things pertaining to history, to science, to literature, and to the arts; but that, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, they had been made so thoroughly acquainted with the truths and duties of the Christian religion, that they might be regarded as safe from the danger or fatal error. The same may be said of all true Christians now, that they are so taught by the Spirit of God, that they have a practical acquaintance with what religion is, and with what it requires, and are secure from falling into fatal error.

I John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him

Previously, the apostle warned of the dangers of hate; now he speaks of the ever-present danger of loving the world and those things in it.

He who loves the world cannot truly love God, and he who loves God must forsake any love or affection he might have for the world.

The flesh craves carnal, earthly, and material things, but the Spirit loves, cherishes, and holds in the highest regard spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things. In this way the children of God and the children of the world are distinguished, and can be easily separated each from the other by observing what nature rules them. Therefore, just as saints love God and will forsake the world for Him, those who love the world will forsake God for the world.

It is also impossible to love this world or anything truly in it, and at the same time love a God Who is so completely opposite of it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 2:15

If any man love the world . . .—If, in this sense, a person loves the world, it shows that he has no true religion; that is, if characteristically he loves the world as his portion, and lives for that; if it is the ruling principle of his life to gain and enjoy that, it shows that his heart has never been renewed, and that he has no part with the children of God. See the James 4:4 note; Matthew 6:24 note.

If a man seeks to be a friend of this world, he has positioned himself as God's enemy.

Ultimately, to be a friend of the world is to align oneself with it. This means, to agree with the principles that govern it, and share in the belief that men can live as they will, and need not to live as God wills.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Jas. 4:4

Is enmity with God—Is in fact hostility against God, since that world is arrayed against him. It neither obeys his laws, submits to his claims, nor seeks to honor him. To love that world is, therefore, to be arrayed against God; and the spirit which would lead us to this is, in fact, a spirit of hostility to God.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world—"Whoever" he may be, whether in the church or out of it. The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this

Born of God

respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase “whosoever will” (βούληθῆ *boulēthē*) implies “purpose, intention, design.” It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world. It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. . . .

Is the enemy of God—This is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the church. It settles the point that anyone, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian.

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Lust of the flesh.

The Greek word for *lust* is #1939 *epithumia*. Strong’s defines it as “desire, passionate longing, lust.”

The unsaved have a great longing to satisfy not God but the fallen nature of self. Since those unsaved are only flesh, then they shall seek to live their lives solely by the passions and appetites their carnal and fallen nature produces.

Lust of the eyes.

It was the lust of the eyes that led to Eve’s sin when she saw the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eye, and desired to make one wise (Gen. 3:6). Much sin and rebellion therefore has begun with the eye, to then expand itself to be operated through the entire body.

Pride of life.

There is nothing more dangerous, and able to prevent salvation, than pride.

It was this that led the Lord to cast Satan out of heaven, and countless men have followed the devil’s affection for and embracement of pride since. Yea, the one primary characteristic of the devil is that he is proud. The one thing he seeks to promote above all other things, is that human and fleshly pride is good and not evil.

This is also why the Lord will seek to hide pride from man—simply because if discovered, most men will never be able to escape its hold on their life. Since whenever men gain a strong appetite for pride, it generally will even be preferred above God in their life.

Thus, the Lord seeks to hide pride from man, lest being proud, is more cherished and sought to be grown in, than even love.

Job 33:14–17 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.

Independence and trust in self are evil things, and those led by pride seek nothing more than to be wholly independent of the Lord

At the core of all pride is also an inward desire to be worshiped as God. This is what Satan hoped to accomplish, and so will all those who follow his sinful example seek the same aim.

The nature by which a man is ruled by, and is born of, is that which will ultimately determine all his appetites and passions. For those born of the flesh, their appetite will be for carnal things, and not anything divine or spiritual. To be so though, leads to eternal death.

Romans 8:6 *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Rom. 8:6

For to be carnally minded—Margin, “The minding of the flesh.” The sense is, that to follow the inclinations of the flesh, or the corrupt propensities of our nature, leads us to condemnation and death. The expression is one of great energy, and shows that it not only leads to death, or leads to misery, but that it is death itself; there is woe and condemnation in the very act and purpose of being supremely devoted to the corrupt passions. Its only tendency is condemnation and despair.

I John 2:17 *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

What a man does, how he lives, and what he cherishes ultimately determines his destiny. This life, and how men choose to live it, therefore, will determine everything in life to come.

And just as Matthew Henry once said, “Those who are not saints on earth will never be saints in heaven,” it is, therefore, only those who *doeth the will of God* that God has promised shall *abideth for ever*.

Of this God’s Word is certain: that the wicked shall perish, and only the righteous will live.

Obedience to the eternal God, therefore, has as its great reward and treasure, of being brought to share in His own eternal and spiritual nature.

I John 2:18 *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

The phrase *the last time* makes no determination regarding the length of time that needs to be completed before Christ’s appearance. It is enough to know that both *antichrists* and the *Antichrist* shall abound and influence the world, before the Son of God is revealed from heaven.

By their evil influence in the world, it can be, and is, confirmed that we are in the last time. The primary characteristic also of all whom God considers antichrists, is the denial of the true Christ.

This means rejecting Christ’s lordship as if He has never appeared in the world, and been raised from the dead, as well as refusing to bow to His Person.

To be anti-Christ is thus to not yield to the sovereignty given to the Son of God, by God.

Born of God

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, I John 2:18

Every man is an antichrist, who denies the Person, or any of the offices of Christ; and in denying the Son, he denies the Father also, and has no part in his favour while he rejects his great salvation.