

Session 4

## *An Exposition of I John*

### *I John 2:8–18*

#### Scriptures

<i>I John 2:8</i>	<i>I John 4:17</i>	<i>I John 2:15</i>
<i>John 15:13</i>	<i>I John 4:18a</i>	<i>James 4:4</i>
<i>I John 2:9</i>	<i>I John 2:11</i>	<i>I John 2:16</i>
<i>I John 3:14</i>	<i>Proverbs 4:19</i>	<i>Job 33:14–17</i>
<i>I John 2:10</i>	<i>Matthew 6:23</i>	<i>Romans 8:6</i>
<i>I John 4:8</i>	<i>II Corinthians 11:14</i>	<i>I John 2:17</i>
<i>Romans 13:10</i>	<i>I John 2:12–14</i>	<i>I John 2:18</i>

*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.

John's commandment is new because of the divine love that led Christ to lay down His life for the brethren.

It was this depth of love, where one was willing to die for the sins of others, which reveals, the true essence of 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 for friends. One could perhaps fathom dying for those we have blood relationship with, such as children and other close family members, yet Jesus died for the ungodly: those who were strangers to God, alienated from Him, and Who had lived lives completely contrary to divine will.

Life is the most precious thing a man has. In fact, it is all he really has, and is his most priceless possession. To give it up, is to give up all that one has.

This is the divine love that Jesus manifested. It is this manner of love, of being willing to lay down our life for the brethren (if not unto death, then surely in life), that any who claim relationship with the Son of God are commanded to walk in.

*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.*

This light that now shines is Jesus Christ, and the love He openly manifested in the world.

This divine love can still be felt in those who have been given Christ's own divine nature in the form of the Holy Spirit today.

When a man is baptized by Jesus Christ, and has been given the Spirit of God, then God's love will be shed forth, and the glory of the Savior, is again revealed in the world.

***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 abiding in Christ and His love, *hateth his brother*.

Hate blinds; it does not enlighten.

Where hate is, darkness is, and all who hate remain in darkness even now. Light and hate are incompatible.

Thus, it is impossible to hate the brethren and have any connection to divine light whatsoever.

Nowhere also is maintaining a false profession of the Lord more tolerated than in today's churches. Sadly, merely claiming that one is a Christian is enough for most people to accept you as such.

Yet it is not merely a profession of faith that saves a man if there is no true obedience to the Son of God and His will for man.

*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.

*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. Compare the notes at 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 true Christian behavior, there is no substitute for divine love. It is heralded as greater than even faith and hope.

Love is what God is, and none can claim true relationship with Him, who do not possess the same love as God.

Love led Jesus' ministry while on the earth, 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 generous love as Him.

By love we know that a man has passed from death unto life, but if a man does not genuinely possess Christ's love in his heart, then it is certain he remains spiritually dead.

Where love therefore is, life is; where love is absent, life also is as well.

*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 abides in God's light and reveals himself as a true child of God.

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

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

Hence, the foundation of any true knowledge of God, both must, and will, include the possession of God's love.

If a man does not possess this divine fruit, then he is surely not a true Christian, and should never be recognized as such.

*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 this life will cause him to stumble.

By pursuing Christ's love, men avoid sin, and will do nothing ill to their neighbors.

Thus, he who truly loves both God, and the people of God, will neither create a stumbling block to himself, in his own spiritual walk, nor be a stumbling block to other Christians, in theirs.

Wherever also true love for God and other Christians exists, the Lord's divine law has been fulfilled.

*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 love that when men walk in it, practice it daily, and pursue its expansion in their lives, it fulfills God's complete purpose for their lives.

Thus, if a man truly desires to do God's will in his life, he should pursue walking in the very nature of God.

If it is truly love that rules a man, forms his character, and is the underlying force behind all his actions and decisions, then he will be filled with boldness, and not timidity, when Jesus returns to judge the world in righteousness.

***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—...* 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.

***1 John 4:18a There is no fear in love.***

Love's divine presence drives out not only the fear of man, but also all fear of God.

The greatest shame that sinners will have at Christ's judgment, is their disobedience to Christ's very clear and direct message, to love. Since love is Christ's greatest commandment, then not to love is the greatest sin.

And though most do not believe that the absence of love is sin, in truth there is no greater sin that can be committed.

Not to love, in the Lord's eyes, is the greatest sin of all.

***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 to the light whatsoever, and as a result have no closeness, resemblance, or association either with God or the Son of God.

Not only, though, do those who hate the brethren both live and walk in darkness, but they also, as a further result of their sin, possess 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 righteous man can sin and see the error of his way, but the wicked have no heavenly light to make known their sin. Hate, therefore, so blinds a man's soul that all ability to navigate properly in this life is lost.

The willful sinner, then, is blind not only to God and His light, but also equally to any true wisdom regarding how to govern his own life properly.

There is a great and dangerous consequence for abandoning God's will; it is that darkness will completely overtake the sinner.

He also who sins, has no idea whatsoever of the great error he is committing, nor the final death that sin will produce.

*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*”).

Who also can really be saved if they view hate as a form of enlightenment? With all devilish deception, the illusion is given that one is following the light.

Indeed, those most in the dark often view themselves as the most enlightened men of all.

Many also have ignorantly believed they were following God, while being filled with hate, when in fact, it was only Satan’s deception that created their illusion.

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

*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.

***I John 2:12–14 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.***

***<sup>13</sup> I 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.***

***<sup>14</sup> I 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.***

Because the Holy Spirit is Himself light, He will detect and identify when darkness is only parading itself as light.

Discerning of spirits is that spiritual ability and gift of God, which enables those saved by Him, to detect not only the true workings of the Holy Spirit in their own souls, but also all other deceptive and erring spirits, seeking to lead them away from God.

Through the possession of the Holy Spirit, and the discernment and power He produces in the believer, Christians will be brought to know God, and that they have overcome the wicked one.

***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 danger of hate; now he speaks of the ever-present danger of loving a carnal and sinful world.

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

This world is corrupt; therefore, any true love or affection for it, reveals that there is no true affection for God, or the spiritual holiness that He seeks to lead men toward.

Hence, just as saints love God and will forsake the world for Him, those who love the world, will gladly forsake God for it.

It is impossible to love the world, and at the same time properly claim any true and sincere love for its Creator.

*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.

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

To be a friend of the world is to align oneself with it. Thus, wherever and whenever, men choose fellowship with the world, they have made themselves the Lord's enemies.

***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 respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase “whosoever will” 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 *epithumia* #1939 *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 nothing but flesh, then they will seek to live their lives solely by its desires and appetites.

*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 able to make one wise.

Much sin and rebellion begin with the eye, and then they expand themselves so that the entire body is consumed by them.

Many a man has looked upon something with lust, which then ultimately led him to turn away from God, and His will for his life.

*Pride of life.*

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

The Lord detests pride. It was this that led to Satan's fall, and countless men have followed his rebellious example.

No doubt the devil's main attribute is his pride. Consequently, the one thing he seeks to promote above all other things in this world is leading men to imitate his own evil character.

Pride is also that deceptive sin that God seeks to hide from men, simply because if most get a taste of it, they will value it so much more, than the pursuit of holiness.

***Job 33:14–17 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not***  
<sup>15</sup> *In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;*  
<sup>16</sup> *Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,*  
<sup>17</sup> *That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.*

*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Job 33:17*

*From his purpose.*—Rather, That He may withdraw man from carrying out his evil actions, and may remove that pride from man which he secretly cherishes. This is the main point of Elihu's teaching: that the purposes of God are disciplinary, to keep man from the sin which otherwise he would be prone to commit.

At the core of all pride is an inward desire to be worshiped as God.

Practically, this is first evidenced, when men worship themselves. This is what Satan desired, and so will all those who have chosen to follow his apostate example, engage in as well.

The nature by which a man is ruled is what ultimately determines his appetites and passions. Consequently, those born of the *flesh* will have no other desire than those that are both worldly and fleshly.

But God's Word reveals that all who choose to be led by the sinful nature of the flesh will die.

To be *carnally minded is death*; thus when a man is ruled by the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, he has no other end, than the grave and complete separation from all things eternal. This undoubtedly includes God Himself.

To be led by the flesh, and its unholy desires, is to ultimately separate oneself from any true hope of receiving the eternal life presented through Jesus Christ.

***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.

It makes no difference what men love in the world—whether it is wealth, leisure, hobbies, or any other worldly affection; to love this world, is to forfeit any hope of receiving God's eternal spiritual life.

***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 determine his destiny. It is therefore only those who [*do*] *the will of God* that God has promised will *abideth for ever*.

Sin is temporary, and though it sprouts, blooms, and has its day, it quickly fades and passes away.

Of this God's Word is certain: the wicked will perish, and only the righteous are given the hope of living forever.

Obedience to the eternal God has as its heavenly reward, receiving the same spiritual life as Him.

***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* will come before the Son of God is revealed to the world, of which He also is to ultimately rule.

*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.

To reject Christ's lordship is itself a form of antichrist.

Hence, if a man does not submit to Christ's rule, he rejects Christ's government and the overall authority God has given to His Son.

It is God's right to transfer authority to whom He wills, and His will is that His Son will reign over mankind forever.

Thus, all who are properly labeled antichrist, are those resistant to Christ's divine rule.

To be anti-Christ is to reject the rule of Christ, and the power and authority that God has now given to His Son.

By this truth, it is easily observed, that those who choose to reject Jesus as Lord of their lives are by God's definition antichrist.

The more also the Son of God is rejected on the earth, the closer time draws, for Christ's judgment to come upon her.

