

What manner of love.

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

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practises righteousness is born of Him.

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

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

And everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

(1 John 2. 28 – 3. 3.)

I want to focus on just three simple points from the opening verses of 1 John 3; namely, (i) **what we are**, (ii) **what we shall be**, and (iii) **what we should be**.¹

What we are.

It is always helpful when people tell you clearly why they are writing to you. And towards the close of his letter, John supplies us with one of several reasons he had for writing: 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God', he says, 'that you may know that you have eternal life'.²

Clearly then it was the apostle's intention (and, behind him, it was God's intention) that everyone who knows the Lord Jesus should have the assurance of his or her salvation ... that they should have the certainty of possessing eternal life.

And to this end John provides his readers with a set of distinguishing evidences and characteristics of those who have experienced the new, spiritual birth. These are the birthmarks, if you like, of those who, by faith, have become the children of God.

John's main³ checklist is in fact very short. Following the order in his letter:

- (i) 'Everyone who practises righteousness is **born of Him**'.⁴
- (ii) 'Everyone who loves is **born of God**'.⁵
- (iii) 'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been **born of God**'.⁶

Our reading included the first of these.⁷

John had earlier spoken of Christians as those who 'have fellowship with God', as those who 'walk in the light', as those who 'know God', as those who 'keep His word', as those who 'abide in the Son and in the Father', and so on.⁸ But here, in the closing verse of chapter 2, is the first time in his letter that John mentions being 'born' of God.⁹

Here the point is that 'membership in the family of God is to be recognised by the family likeness'.¹⁰

And, it seems to me that, as he pens the words '**born of Him**', the apostle's heart and soul are overwhelmed by the splendour (by the grandeur, by the sheer magnificence) of what he has written.

So much so, that the apostle is unable to suppress an exclamation of wonder and amazement. '**Behold**', he bursts out ('Just look at this'), 'what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God'.

Many goods which we find on sale today in the UK are imported from far-off lands, such as India, mainland China or Hong Kong. And, interestingly, the word the apostle John uses here (translated '**what manner of**') originally meant 'from what country does this come?'¹¹

The word was employed in John's day to describe anything which was strange and unaccountable. The word isn't found in the Greek Old Testament at all, and, in the New Testament, is sometimes used (as here) to express astonishment. For example, Matthew reports in chapter 8 of his gospel how he and the other apostles had used this very word when our Lord had subdued a great tempest on the Sea of

Galilee: they 'marvelled, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"'¹²

John is saying then, 'This love which the Father has given us is a *most unusual* kind of love ... it is an *extraordinary* love ... it is, in effect, an 'alien', a 'foreign', kind of love'. And so it most certainly is! For this love did not come from *anywhere*, or from *anyone*, on earth!¹³

John has much to say in his writings about the new birth. In his gospel, (i) he speaks of the *means* of the new birth: 'As many as received Him (the Lord Jesus), to them He gave the right (the authority) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name', and (ii) he stresses the *necessity* of the new birth: we hear the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, 'Marvel not that I said to you, "You must be born again"'.¹⁴

What led John, who recorded Jesus' words to Nicodemus, to marvel now was not '*how*' someone can be born again, but '*that*', by God's grace, he and others had been!

In his gospel, therefore, John spoke of both the *means* and the *necessity* of the new birth. But here in his letter he traces it back to its *source* and its *spring*: to the Father's truly amazing love for us.¹⁵

And I note that, according to John, it is not merely that God has 'shown' or 'revealed' His love to us, which, of course, He has.¹⁶ It is a '*love*', John says, which He has '*bestowed on*' (literally, 'given to') *us*'.

I might say to someone who is going to meet one of my friends or relatives, 'Please give him or her, my love'. And I expect the person to whom I am speaking to say something like, 'Malcolm sends his love'. In practice, my request means, 'Assure so and so of my love for him.

But God has 'given' us His love in a *far deeper* sense than that, because, as John knew very well, *giving His love to us* involved Him in nothing less than *giving His Son for us*.¹⁷ I think of the words of the Lord Jesus towards the close of John 16: 'The Father Himself loves you'!¹⁸ And the manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Golgotha tell us just how much the Father does love us!

'*That we should be called children of God!*' 'Children', mark you, not just His 'offspring', which latter is true of the whole human race as God's creatures. Three years

Paul announced to the men of Athens, 'In Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets [Arātus and Cleanthes¹⁹] have said, "For we are also His offspring"'.²⁰ But, as believers in the Lord Jesus, we are not only God's 'offspring' (by creation), we are also His 'children' (by redemption), with all the warmth and close relationship which the word 'children' conveys.

'*That we should be called*', that such a designation (such a title) should be ours. *Luke* tells us that, *by the world around*, the disciples of the Lord Jesus were first called '*Christians*' at Antioch;²¹ but *John* tells us here that, *by God*, they are called '*children*'. The world, that is, identifies us as Christians; God identifies us as His children.

'*The children of God*'. According to the ancient oral law of the Jews, one Rabbi, whose life and teaching overlapped that of John (Rabbi Akiva), taught, 'Beloved are Israel, for they are called children of God ... as it is said, "You are children of the Lord your God"', a quotation he lifted from the first verse of Deuteronomy 14.²² And certainly Israel were especially loved by God and were spoken of as His children.

But John isn't writing to Jews. He is writing to Christians, the majority of whom were Gentiles, those whom Paul had once described as (i) dead, (ii) disobedient, (iii) defiled and (iv) doomed.²³ And yet, because of the astounding love which the Father has lavished on them, John insists that they are now, in Rabbi Akiba's words, 'called children of God'.

Indeed, God calls Christians the same as the apostle John called his original readers a few verses before: 'And now, little children (the same word), abide in Him'.²⁴ I have no doubt that it meant a great deal to the earliest readers of his letter that the only surviving apostle would readily address them as his children, but that *was nothing* compared with the fact that Almighty God Himself did the same!

But note that John does not say, 'we should be called *His* children', which is how I would probably have expressed it. He said rather, 'What manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children *of God*' ... in effect, that 'we should be called children of Him who is God, no less', thereby stressing the honour, the dignity, the nobility of our relationship.²⁵

My mind goes to young David, who, following his spectacular victory over Goliath, was urged by the messengers of King to marry one of Saul's daughters. 'Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son in law', David had responded, 'seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed (of no great importance, of no great account)?'²⁶ But you and I have been brought into *a far, far more glorious family* than that of some mere earthly monarch, even if he did happen to be the King of Israel!

I recall reading of Danish missionaries who went to India many years ago and who appointed some of their Indian converts to translate a catechism. When they reached our text, one of the translators protested, 'It is too much! Let us write that we shall be permitted to kiss his feet' (which in India was a gesture of great respect).²⁷ The very idea that mere creatures of dust like us, undeserving and sinful, should be taken by God to be His children was, as the young man saw it, 'too much'. And yet *it is most wonderfully true!*

But remember, please, that the apostle John was no recent convert. Far from it! He was now an old man. In his youth, he had been one of the favoured few to company with the Lord Jesus for over three years and, what is more, He alone had leaned on the Saviour's bosom at the so-called 'Last Supper'.

John's mind and memory were stored with the twenty-one chapters of the fourth gospel. This man had more spiritual knowledge in his little finger than I will ever have. And yet his soul was gripped afresh, and lost in wonder, at the (to him) very familiar truth of the new birth. Alas for us, that we so easily lose the enjoyment and, indeed, the thrill of what it means to be born of God!

'The world does not know us'. 'The world does not recognise us', John adds, 'for what we are'.

Yes, it is true, of course, as John himself insists later, that we should stand out as different from the unbelieving world around by the kind of life we live.²⁸ But John is saying in our verse that there is nothing *physical* or *external* to alert the world around to the fact that we are God's children. We look the same as others; we boast no halos.

And it really should come as no surprise that we pass unrecognised, because, as John quickly points out, the world **'did not know Him'**. The world was blind to the glory of the Only-begotten Son Himself. As he (John) wrote at the beginning of his gospel, 'He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and *the world knew Him not*'.²⁹

I remember reading of an occasion when, during the middle of the morning rush hour on 12 January 2007, a youngish man wearing jeans, a T-shirt and a baseball cap positioned himself against a wall beside a trash can at the L'Enfant Plaza station in Washington, DC. He pulled out a violin and began to play. For 43 minutes, he performed six classical pieces. During that time, well over 1,000 people³⁰ passed by, paying little or no attention. What they did not know was that the man playing outside the Metro that day was Joshua Bell, one of the finest classical musicians in the world. Nor did they realize that he was in fact playing on a Stradivarius violin, worth \$3.5 million.³¹ 'It was a strange feeling', Joshua Bell said later, 'that people were actually ... ignoring me'.³² He was unrecognised as who and what he was.

And so, too, in a far more remarkable sense, was our Lord Jesus. The world of His day simply failed to recognise who and what He was. And, in much the same way, John is saying, the world fails to recognise God's children for who and what they are.

Having said that 'we should be *called* children of God', John immediately assures us (twice³³) that the title 'children of God' isn't only a label. 'We are', he insists, God's children, not in *name only*, but in *fact* and in *reality*.³⁴ And we are God's children *now!*

As many of you know, there are many wonderful '*now's*' of blessing in the writings of the apostle Paul.³⁵ But here John contributes one of his own, **'now we are children of God'**. Make no mistake, we shall never be more the children of God than we are at this moment!

And we, therefore, have every reason to rejoice, whatever circumstances we face. For nothing that happens to us in this life can rob us of our special relationship to God as His children.

I am reminded of the question posed to Amnon, the son of King David, by Jonadab, his so-called 'friend', when Amnon carnally lusted after his sister Tamar, 'Why are you, the king's son, so lean ('so wasted') morning after morning?³⁶ 'Why do you, the king's son', that is, 'pine away morning after morning?'

And the Lord may well have occasion to say to me more often that I like to admit, 'And why, Malcolm, are you so downcast and depressed, seeing that you are "the King's son"?'

What we shall be.

And, as if all this is not enough, on top of it all, having spoken of **our present dignity**, John directs our attention to **our future destiny**.

And, just as the reality of **our present identity** is hidden from **the world** around us, so the details of **our future destiny** are hidden from **us**.

'It has not yet appeared what we shall be'. For **we** can no more comprehend 'what we shall be' than **the world** can comprehend what 'we are', and this for the simple reason that we do not now possess the faculties, the apparatus, the equipment to enable us to grasp what we are going to be. We simply cannot imagine, for example, what (should we die) it will mean to be 'raised' (as the apostle Paul expresses it in 1 Corinthians 15) 'in incorruption', 'in glory' and 'in power' ... for our body to be raised 'a spiritual body'.³⁷

A brilliant medical doctor of the 17th century, Sir Thomas Browne, once wrote, 'A dialogue between two infants in the womb concerning the state of *this world*, might handsomely illustrate our ignorance of *the next*'.³⁸ So too, I guess, might a discussion between two caterpillars concerning what it would be like when they became butterflies!

But, while frankly admitting that there is so much we **do not know**, John lets us peer through the keyhole of the other world for just a moment to assure us that we **do know** the most important thing: **'we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him'**, like the Lord Jesus, that is.

Note, please, that word 'shall': 'we **shall** be like Him'. For it stands in marked contrast to what John had said at the close of chapter 2: 'when He appears (the same words as in our text³⁹), we **may** have confidence and not shrink back from Him in shame at His coming'.⁴⁰ But *here* there is no 'may'! This is the happy (and the certain) prospect for every believer.

The apostle Paul once assured the saints at Rome, 'whom He (God) foreknew, He also predestined to be *conformed to the image of his Son*'.⁴¹

And surely this must rank as *the ultimate expression of God's favour*. For God has determined to make us, not like *Abraham* (of whom God spoke as His 'friend'⁴²), not like *Moses* (whom God knew 'face to face'⁴³), not like *Daniel* (of whom God spoke more than once as 'greatly beloved'⁴⁴), but like *His own beloved Son!*

Well then did Mr Darby write:

And is it so, *I shall be like Thy Son?*
Is this the grace which He for me has won?
Father of glory! Thought beyond all thought,
In glory to His own blest likeness brought!

I have sometimes asked myself which of the following two great Bible truths is the more amazing ... (i) that one day the Saviour *came down from heaven*, to be *made like His brethren*,⁴⁵ or (ii) that one day His brethren will be *taken to heaven*, then made like *Him*.⁴⁶ I have never been able to answer that question; I only know that I belong to an incredibly blessed and privileged people!

'We shall be like Him, **for we shall see Him as He is**'. Clearly, the very face-to-face sight of the Lord Jesus will trigger the great change and transformation.⁴⁷

I read in my New Testament:

- (i) of *wise men* who once travelled to see Him,⁴⁸
- (ii) of *devout Simeon* who once waited to see Him,⁴⁹
- (iii) of *close family members* who once stood nearby hoping to see Him,⁵⁰
- (iv) of *rich Zacchaeus* who once climbed up into a tree to see Him,⁵¹
- (v) of *Herod Antipas* who once desired to see Him,⁵² and
- (vi) of *certain Greeks* who once requested to see Him.⁵³

But the wonder of it all is that one day **I** shall 'see Him'.

What we should be.

And then, in verse, 3 John draws our attention to the practical implications of this hope.⁵⁴

Moving us on from (i) **what we are**,⁵⁵ and (ii) **what we shall be**,⁵⁶ John now directs us to (iii) **what we should be**.

Moving us on, if you like, from speaking of our **dignity** and our **destiny**, he now points us to our **duty**: **'everyone who has this hope set on Him** (the Lord Jesus) **purifies himself, just as He is pure**'.⁵⁷

We know from chapter 1 that we don't '*cleanse*' ourselves from our sins. Verse 7 there makes it clear that only the blood of Jesus does that: 'the blood of Jesus His (God's) Son cleanses us from all sin'.

I understand that, in her young days, the hymn-writer Frances Ridley Havergal was plagued by spiritual depression. But I have read that she had a life-transforming experience one day when reading her Greek New Testament.

For, when she came to 1 John 1. 7, she discovered, from the tense⁵⁸ of the verb John used, that the blood of Jesus 'goes on' ('keeps on') cleansing the believer,⁵⁹ and that from every sin. I suppose it is hardly surprising, therefore, that you will find that verse inscribed on her tombstone in the village of Astley, near Kidderminster, in England.

Make no mistake. As Miss Havergal discovered, there is both infinite and constant cleansing power in the Saviour's blood.⁶⁰

But though His blood 'cleanses' me from the **guilt** of my every sin, the Lord Jesus expects (indeed requires) me to 'purify' myself from the **practice** of sin. This is *not* an optional extra for the Christian; it is the bounden duty of every believer.

Indeed, I note that John switches at this point from the corporate, collective language of verses 1 and 2 ('**we** are children of God'; '**we** shall be like him'; '**we** shall see him'; and so on) to urge '**every one**' of us, as individuals, to purify ourselves (to resist the many defiling influences around us).⁶¹

And we can hardly miss the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself is the pattern and standard of our purity!⁶² Because *one day we shall see Him as He 'is'*, *we should now become like Him as He 'is'*.

Verse 2 holds out before me the staggering prospect that one day I shall be *altogether* like the Lord Jesus. But, according to verse 3, that same Lord requires me to *begin that process* myself now, and not least in this, that I imitate Him in His purity and freedom from all that is unholy.⁶³

In summary, we have focused on three simple points from the opening verses of 1 John 3; namely, (i) **what we are**, (ii) **what we shall be**, and (iii) **what we should be**.

May the Lord enable us to enjoy that which we have learnt from verses 1 and 2, concerning what we are and what we shall be, and may He help us to live in accordance with what we have learnt from verse 3 concerning what we should be!

Footnotes

¹ 'The section to verse 12 seems to fall most naturally into three parts:

(i) The position (present and future) of the children of God (3. 1-3).

(ii) The essential character of the children of God (3. 4-9).

(iii) The outward manifestation of the children of God (3. 10-12)'.
(B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of John*, pages 95-111.)

'The three verses are perhaps the three most moving verses in the entire epistle, and they do merit our detailed consideration', D M Lloyd-Jones, *Life in Christ*, Volume 3, Studies in 1 John.

² 1 John 5. 13; cf. 1 John 1. 4 and 2. 1.

³ Cf. 1 John 3. 9; 5. 18.

⁴ 1 John 2. 29.

⁵ 1 John 4. 7.

⁶ 1 John 5. 1.

⁷ Taking it for granted, then, that God Himself is righteous, John tells us we must conclude that those who have this righteous God for their Father will, as a habit of life, practise righteousness. That is, that those who are, as John says, 'born of Him', will naturally exhibit the family traits and likeness.

⁸ 1 John 1. 3, 7; 2. 3, 5, 24. In effect, John says, 'I want you to realise that, as the result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not only in fellowship with God but also you have become children of God'.

⁹ It will be mentioned several times later in the epistle; see 1 John 3. 9; 4. 7; 5. 1, 4, 18.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, page 78.

¹¹ See, for example, (i) W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Manner' B, (ii) *Robertson's Word Pictures*, and (iii) *The Cambridge Greek New Testament* on 1 John 3. 1.

¹² Matt. 8. 27.

¹³ 'The expression ['What manner of] translates *potapēn* which meant originally "of what country". It is as if the Father's love is so unearthly, so foreign to this world, that John wonders from what country it may come', John Stott, *The Letters of John* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) on 1 John 3. 1.

¹⁴ John 1. 12 and 3. 7.

¹⁵ Peter attributes new birth to God's great mercy (the response of His pity to human misery); 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant ('much', great) mercy has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead', 1 Pet 1. 3.

James attributes new birth to His sovereign will, 'Of His own will He begat us (brought us forth) by the word of truth', James 1.18.

But John attributes new birth to His extraordinary 'love'. Not that this is in any way surprising; love is very much John's key word; occurring 46 times in this letter alone (plus 'beloved' five times).

¹⁶ 1 John 4. 9-10.

¹⁷ John 3. 16.

¹⁸ John 16. 27. And these words came from the One who personally appreciated the Father's love for Him, John 17. 24; cf. Mark 1. 11; John 3. 35; 5. 20; 10. 17 ... Eph. 1. 6; Col. 1. 13.

¹⁹ The Cretan poet Epimenides (ca. 600 B.C.; cf. Tit. 1. 12) had written, "For in thee we live and move and have our being." [In his poem 'Cretica'] The Cilician poet Aratus (c. 315-240 B.C.), and Cleanthes (331-233 B.C.) before him, had written, "We are also his offspring." [From Aratus' 'Phaenomena 5', and Cleanthes' 'Hymn to Zeus'.]

²⁰ Acts 17. 28.

²¹ Acts 11. 26; cf. Acts 26. 28; 1 Pet. 4. 16.

²² The full quotation is, 'Rabbi Akiva would say ... Beloved are Israel, for they are called children of God; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that it was made known to them that they are called children of God, as it is said, "You are children of the Lord your God"'. (Quoted from, 'Ethics of the Fathers' {'*Pirke Abot*'}, 3. 14. Accessed from http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2019/jewish/Chapter-Three.htm.

See also <http://www.torah.org/learning/pirkei-avos/chapter3-18a.html>.)

Judaism's oral law is recorded in writing in sixty-three tractates and is called the Mishnah. One of the Mishnah's tractates contains no laws at all. It is called *Pirke Abot* (usually translated as 'Ethics of the Fathers'), in which their most famous sayings and proverbs are recorded. Rabbi Akiva lived from AD 50 to AD 135. See F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 85.

²³ Eph. 2. 1-3.

²⁴ 1 John 2. 28.

²⁵ Literally, 'behold what love has given us the Father'. This word order draws together the 'us' and 'the Father' at the close in striking contrast.

²⁶ 1 Sam. 18. 23.

²⁷ 'The Danish missionaries stationed at Malabar got some of their converts to translate the Scriptures. When they came to 1 John 3. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God", one of the native translators was so startled that he laid down his pen, and exclaimed, "It is too much. Let us rather render it, 'They shall be permitted to kiss His feet'", Henry Pickering, '*One Thousand Tales Worth Telling*', page 210.

²⁸ 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother', 1 John 3. 10.

²⁹ John 1. 10. Compare the words of Paul, 'those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because *they did not know Him*, nor the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him', Acts 13. 27.

³⁰ 1,097 to be precise.

³¹ In total, he collected only \$32.17.

³² See the account at <http://www.snopes.com/music/artists/bell.asp>.

³³ Apart from the statement, 'now we are children of God', in verse 2, the older (and main) Greek manuscripts (including Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Ephraemi) follow the expression, 'called children of God', with the words, 'and so we are', in verse 1.

³⁴ We are *not* like street kids staring in goggle-eyed through the window of some high-class restaurant window; we are seated inside, feasting on the sumptuous feast spread for us there!

³⁵ For example, 'being *now* justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him', Rom. 5. 9; 'there is therefore *now* no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus', Rom. 8. 1; '*now* in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ', Eph. 2. 13.

³⁶ 2 Sam. 13. 4.

³⁷ 1 Cor. 15. 42-44.

³⁸ *Hydriotaphia*, chapter IV. See <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/hydrioframes/hydrio4.html> ... the paragraph preceding the link to note 16.

³⁹ 1 John 3. 2.

⁴⁰ 1 John 2. 28.

⁴¹ Rom. 8. 29.

⁴² 2 Chron. 20. 7; Isa. 41. 8; James 2. 23.

⁴³ Deuteronomy 34. 10.

⁴⁴ Dan. 10. 11, 19.

⁴⁵ John 6. 33, 38, 50; Heb. 2. 17.

⁴⁶ 1 John 3. 2; Phil. 3. 20-21.

⁴⁷ In the breaking of bread we ‘remember’ the Lord Jesus principally as He ‘was’; but we will ‘see’ Him as He ‘is’.

⁴⁸ Matt. 2. 1, 11.

⁴⁹ Luke 2. 25-26.

⁵⁰ Luke 8. 20,

⁵¹ Luke 19. 4.

⁵² Luke 9. 9; 23. 8.

⁵³ John 12. 21.

⁵⁴ The very first word of verse 3, ‘And’, tells us that it is intimately and logically connected with what has gone before.

⁵⁵ 1 John 3. 1-2a.

⁵⁶ 1 John 3. 2b.

⁵⁷ This is the only place in which John uses the word ‘hope, which is a characteristic thought of both Paul and Peter.

⁵⁸ The present tense: ‘καθαριζει’.

⁵⁹ ‘The verb suggests that God does more than forgive; he erases the stain of sin. And the present tense shows that it is a continuous process’, John Stott, *op. cit.*, on 1 John 1. 7. ‘The efficacy of that precious blood is perpetually available to cleanse from every single sin’, A. M. S Gooding, ‘1, 2, and 3 John’ (What the Bible Teaches), on 1 John 1. 7.

⁶⁰ ‘One of the intensest moments of my life was when I saw the force of that word “cleanseth”. The utterly unexpected and altogether unimagined sense of its fulfilment to me, on simply believing it in its fullness, was just indescribable. I expected nothing like it short of Heaven ... If “all” in 1 John 1. 7 does not mean “all”, how much does it mean? And if “cleanseth” only means “cleansed me when I said my prayers last night” what force is there in tenses? And I know that such a blessing is to be had, and that life is a different thing then. And I know that it is not perfection, nor perfectionism, because if it were, I should not need and desire and claim that wonderful perpetual present tense—“goes on cleansing”. I cannot do without the precious blood of Jesus one hour or one moment’, F. R. Havergal. http://www.kingsleypress.com/previews/frances_havergal.php.

⁶¹ And I note that John uses the same tense here that he had in chapter 1 verse 7 – there telling me that the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing me; here telling me that I am to keep on purifying myself – to keep on resisting the many defiling influences around me ... to be constantly on my guard against anything impure. See 1 Cor. 6. 18 and compare the example of Joseph, Gen. 39. 12.

⁶² In this life, men become like the objects of their worship. Those who make idols become like them (Psa. 115. 8). And believers, ‘beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor. 3. 18).

⁶³ 1 John 3. 5. The Person and life of the Lord Jesus are frequently held up as examples for us by the apostle John: 1 John 2. 6; 3. 7, 16; 4. 17. Cf. John 13. 15, 34; 15. 12.