

## **BORN OF GOD**

Being born of God results in a transformed life.

John wrote the Gospel of John evangelistically so people might believe in Christ and have life (cf. Jn. 20:30-31). He wrote the epistle of 1 John to the believer so that he might be DISCERNING (cf. 1 Jn. 3:9-10) and have ASSURANCE (cf. 5:13) based on the evidence of being born of God.

John writes 1 John to believers. He assumes they have believed the gospel truth as spelled out in the Gospel of John. The key issue in John's gospel is the issue of BELIEF. The key issue in 1 John is that of being BORN OF GOD. Those who believe in Jesus have been born of God (cf. 1 Jn. 5:1). We are never commanded to be born of God. This is God's work and does not intersect with human responsibility at all (cf. Jn. 1:13). However, we are commanded to BELIEVE, which does intersect with human response and human responsibility (cf. Jn. 1:12, 1 Jn. 3:23). When we believe, we are born of God.

Being born of God underlies all the evidence that one is a true believer as presented in 1<sup>st</sup> John. It is the ultimate issue. Those born of God have transformed lives. They are now partakers of God's nature. God Himself lives within them. They are forever changed! This is true for all genuine believers. There is no exception. The issue for John is this: Have you been born of God? If so, that fundamental life-changing reality will be obvious!

### **1 John 3:9-10 (NKJV)**

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, [**habitually as a lifestyle pattern**] for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, [**habitually as a lifestyle pattern**] because he has been born of God.

10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are **manifest**: Whoever does **not practice righteousness** is not of God, nor is he who does **not love his brother**. (emphasis mine)

EIGHT times in the short book of 1<sup>st</sup> John, he mentions "born of God". In each case, it is connected to the reality of a changed life (cf. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). Being born of God does not mean that we never sin. We may sin as John points out in 1 John 2:1-2. However, we will not "present tense" sin as a lifestyle pattern as does the unbeliever. The God factor now residing in us in combination with our new nature will not allow it.

Being born of God does not mean the perfection of our life in terms of our practice, but it does mean a change in direction. It does not mean that we are sinless in our practice, but it does mean we will sin less!

The reality for the believer is that the LIVING GOD is now residing within. To some people that evidently means little. They go so far as to say this will not necessarily change your life. John the apostle disagrees. The very seed (nature) of God is now in the believer. We are partakers of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). In particular, John singles out two defining realities of God, and says that if we are born of God, these realities will characterize our lives. These realities are the **practice of righteousness** and the **love of fellow believers** (cf. 1 Jn. 2:29; 4:7).

So often people lift 1 John 5:13 out of its context and try to make it stand in isolation to the rest of the book.

We might expect John to address “belief” first, but he doesn’t. Rather he addresses it “last” because the nature of true belief (which is conjoined with being born of God) is to be properly understood through the grid of the preceding material in the book which shows that those truly born of God practice righteousness and love one another.

When you look at the book of 1<sup>st</sup> John as a whole, the reason you can have assurance of eternal life is because right now you evidence sharing in God’s life.

If there is **no evidence** of being born of God in the here and now, as seen in the practice of His love and righteousness, then it is clear that one does not have the life of God. Such a person does not have His eternal life, and they have never been born of God. They do not have saving faith.

The key summary verse of 1 John 5:13 must never be understood in isolation to the key verses of 1 John 3:9-10.

We see therefore that the KNOW related to believing (1 John 5:13) is connected to the KNOW of obedience (1 John 2:3-4) and the KNOW of brotherly love (1 John 3:14). It all starts with true belief at which time one is born of God (1 John 5:1), but out of that reality flows the practice of righteousness and brotherly love. It is the present-tense (continuous) faith of this kind that is the basis for the assurance that John speaks of in 1 John 5:13.

One can’t claim 1 John 5:13 in isolation from the rest of the letter. 1 John 5:13 is the capstone of the letter that presents the basis of being born of God and the fruit that follows.

What is the essence of being born of God? It is a TRANSFORMED LIFE. It is a changed life that actually now shares in and expresses the very life of God.