

Lesson for August 14, 2005

Book of I John

Chapter 2

Verse 12

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you”

Can there be any doubt to whom John is writing? These are believers who have been forgiven as a result of their faith in Christ. John writes as a father to his children. Perhaps John had personally led some of these believers to faith in Christ and for others he became their spiritual father as a pastor and an apostle. “Little children” is a term of affection – “teknion” in Greek. This same Greek word was used by Christ to His twelve disciples, just before His death. John is reminding these believers that they are secure in their relationship with Christ. This will become important as John continues to warn against the false teachings of the Gnostics, warns against Satan’s cosmic system and encourages these believers to live in God’s power system.

“for His name’s sake”

The Lord Jesus Christ has been given a name by God that is above all names. There will come a time in the future when every knee will bow to His name and everyone will acknowledge that He is God. It is on the basis of all that His name entails (Hypostatic Union, virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary spiritual death, physical death, resurrection, ascension and session) that the believer can be forgiven. (Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14)

Verse 13

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning.”

The word for *father* in Greek is “pater” and in this verse refers to those who are spiritual fathers (mature believers). These “fathers” are those who have known Jesus Christ for a long period of time. The One Who they know is the Eternal Son of God; co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The word in Greek for *beginning* is “arche” and is better translated “a beginning which was not a beginning” or “before times eternal.” (John 1:1-3)

“I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.”

Once again, I believe John is speaking of those in the congregation who were young spiritually. Perhaps these are those who were “second generation” believers, having trusted Christ a relatively short time ago compared to the “fathers.” *Young* in Greek is “neaniskos” and means a youth.

Overcome is the Greek word “nikao” and means to prevail. How has the believer overcome? He has overcome by his faith in Christ.

(I John 5:4-5; Revelation 12:11) No believer has the power to overcome Satan (the wicked one) apart from the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. *The wicked one* is “poneros” in Greek and means evil or bad one, which is a reference to Satan (the evil one).

“I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”

John now uses a new word for “little children”, which is the Greek word “paidion.” This word means a very young, immature child. Metaphorically, John is referring to immature Christians or “babes in Christ.” This was not to be construed as a negative term, but as reality within the local churches. By using this word, John has now addressed everyone in the church (the spiritually mature, the maturing and the immature). One thing that can be said of all believers in Christ is that they have known the Father as a result of their faith in Christ. *Known*, however, is “ginosko” in Greek, meaning academic knowledge. This word in no way implies that these immature believers have come to know all about God, which would be “epignosis” in Greek.

Verse 14

“I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning.”

Anytime a phrase or concept is repeated in a passage, it is done so by the writer (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) for emphasis. Such is the case in this verse. John is emphasizing the fact that these mature believers know the Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ. This reassurance of their relationship will be important when John begins the next verse.

“I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

Again, John is emphasizing the fact that everyone in these congregations is eternally secure in Christ and is related to the Eternal Son of God. Interestingly, John adds two phrases to this verse: “because you are strong” and “the word of God abides in you.” It seems clear that John is teaching these young, growing Christians the reason that they have been able to overcome the wicked one (Satan). Notice that John does not tell them that they have overcome Satan by their own strength. They have overcome Satan because they are strong, but this refers to spiritual strength, not human strength (physical or mental). How have these advancing believers gained this spiritual strength? They have become strong through the Word of God (Bible doctrine), which abides in them.

The Greek word for *strong* is “ischuros” and means powerful or mighty. It is used here and in I Corinthians 4:10, metaphorically, for spiritual strength. *Abides* is the Greek word “meno” and means to dwell, to tarry, to continue, to remain, to stand. All of these meanings help us to understand that John is saying that God’s Word continues to reside in their souls (most likely because they have been applying it). The result is overcoming Satan, not only positionally in Christ, but experientially as well.

Verse 15

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

We immediately see why John has given these believers plenty of assurance of their salvation and has reminded them that Jesus Christ is not only the Eternal Son of God, but that He has forgiven them. When a person believes in Christ for eternal salvation, he is not immediately taken to Heaven. The believer must continue to live in a world that is no longer his “home.” As a citizen of Heaven and a member of the Royal Family of God, the believer is going to face a spiritual battle. This battle is for the control of his soul. Sometimes the believer will fail through post-salvation sinning and it is at this moment that he must remember his relationship with Jesus Christ. Recall of pertinent doctrine abiding in his soul will be the key to “not loving the world or the things that are in the world.”

Loving the world is a reference to Satan's cosmic (world) system with its human viewpoint thinking. *World* in Greek is "kosmos" and means an arrangement. "Aion" is the Greek word for "world" when referring to a period of time (not used here). Therefore, John is referring to the world system (arrangement). *Things* is the Greek word "pragma" and means that which is being done or the matters of a certain thing. In this case, the things can be thought, attitude or action that align with Satan's world system. By loving the matters of the world system we are in reality saying we love the things of Satan.

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

If is a third class condition meaning that maybe the believer will love the world system and maybe he won't. However, John points out that if a believer does love the world system, God's love is not operational in him. We must also point out that even the mature believer can be guilty of loving the world system from time to time. This, of course, is a sin and must be confessed in order to restore fellowship with God and the control of the Holy Spirit. It is only inside God's power system (the antithesis of Satan's world system) that the believer can learn to love God and exhibit it toward others.

Love in this verse is the Greek word "agapao" and "agape" and both refer to a genuine, deep affection for someone or something. When used of God, this kind of love is unconditional in nature, emanating from His integrity. When used of the love of the world system these words mean more than "a passing fancy" or friendly affection. The believer referred to here has a deep, genuine love for Satan's cosmic system.

The first stage of reversionism is the believer who reverses his momentum through prolonged residence in Satan's system. John is going to make it perfectly clear what happens to the believer who rejects God's plan, purpose and will in favor of his own (which is really Satan's). Failure to recover quickly from reversionism can eventually lead to "blackout of the soul." In this condition, the things of God are no longer of interest to the believer.

If you are not executing the Christian Way of Life, you are executing a satanic way of life. "No believer can serve two masters simultaneously; he will either hate the one and love the other, or love the one and hate the other." (Matthew 6:24)