

Lesson for December 18, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 5:16-21

Verse 16

“If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”

The term “sin unto death” refers to a believer that is prematurely taken out of this world at God’s discretion for committing certain sins. John is continuing his thought from the previous verse regarding prayer. It is possible to pray for a fellow believer with a favorable result, if that believer has not committed the sin unto death. If a believer commits the sin unto death, your prayer will be of no effect since it is God’s will to “take him home.” There are clear examples of the sin unto to death in Scripture. (Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5-7; Saul in I Chronicles 10:13-14; Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11; A believer committing adultery in I Corinthians 5:1-5; A believer dishonoring the Communion service in I Corinthians 11:27-30)

Verse 17

“All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

John is emphasizing the fact that all sin falls short of God’s righteousness and, therefore, should not be taken lightly. Just because the Lord doesn’t remove you from this earth when you commit a sin, doesn’t mean that He overlooks your sin or that it is okay to continue to practice it. God deals with all categories of sin in the believer’s life. This is why it is so important to continually examine yourself and confess all personal sins immediately. If we fail to do this, God will discipline us. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Verse 18

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

The believer, who is born of God, does not continue to practice sin. “Sinneth not” is in the progressive present tense in Greek meaning a continuous action. The reason the believer cannot continue to sin is that God will not allow it. After various categories of

discipline (warning and intensive), the Lord *will* take a believer out of this world. How long God allows a believer to continue in sin is strictly a matter of the sovereignty of God.

The believer who is residing in God's power system guards himself against the attacks of satanic forces, such as demon influence, the world system, unbelievers and "out of fellowship" believers. Satan uses all these means to blind and distract believers and unbelievers alike. *Toucheth* in Greek is "hapto" and means to fasten to, to cling, to lay hold of or to handle. The Greek word for *keepeth* is "tereo" and means to guard, to fortify, to watch (as keeping an eye on). How does the believer guard against being "fastened" to Satan? According to John, by staying in fellowship with God under the control of the Holy Spirit, which he explains in verse 20.

Verse 19

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

A term used in the Bible to describe our relationship with God as believers is "child of God". It has a similar meaning to "son of God", but we must look to the Greek language to see the slight differences in the two terms. Looking at both words also helps us get a complete meaning of our relationship with God as believers. "Huios", the Greek word for "son" emphasizes *position* and *function*, but the word in Greek for "child", "teknon", emphasizes our *family relationship*. As I said, a slight difference, but one that helps us to understand that not only are we *related* to God through the new birth, we are to *function* as Royal Family after salvation. (John 1:12; Galatians 4:1-7)

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, man not only fell spiritually, he also gave up the rulership of this world. The result was that Satan became the new ruler. From eternity past Satan and his followers (fallen angels) have been attempting to confuse, distract and destroy God and His followers. We must never forget that Satan is a much more powerful being than man and therefore we must be aware of his cunning devices. We must also remember the tactics Satan uses to get us off track. Satan is not omnipresent, omniscient or omnipotent, but he is a genius and has been observing mankind from the beginning. He uses direct

attacks, demon influence and the world system to influence the sin nature to do both human good and evil. Satan is often called the Wicked One, therefore his world system is full of wickedness. The word in Greek for *wickedness* is “poneros” and means evil or bad.

Verse 20

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

Jesus Christ is “God with us.” Christ came to reveal God to the world and to bridge the gap between sinful man and righteous God. He bridged this gap by paying the penalty for our sin. Christ gives the advancing believer an understanding of God and His plan for the human race. Trusting Christ as Savior is phase one of God’s plan. Phase two of His plan is for us to know Him by learning the mind of Christ through the study and application of God’s Word. After Christ ascended to Heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to be the believer’s teacher and guide. (Matthew 1:21-23; I Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5)

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to teach the believer the truth of Bible doctrine. God uses pastor-teachers in this age to teach doctrine, but it is the Holy Spirit Who makes that information understandable. Believers learn Bible doctrine when they expose themselves to it under the control of the Holy Spirit. The result is storage of doctrinal information that can be *used* by the Holy Spirit to guide you into a victorious Christian life. **IGNORANCE OF GOD’S WORD MEANS LIMITED GUIDANCE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.** (John 7:17; 14:26; 16:13-14; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 2:10-16; II Timothy 2:15; 3:16)

God the Holy Spirit places us into union with Jesus Christ at salvation. This is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is neither seen nor felt. It is a fact stated in the Word of God for us to believe. We must always distinguish between the *indwelling*, the *baptism* and the *filling* of the Holy Spirit. These are all separate and distinct ministries of the Holy Spirit. Once again, none of these ministries is seen or felt. The indwelling is God the Holy Spirit permanently residing in the body of the believer. The baptism of God the Holy Spirit is placing the believer into permanent union with Christ. And the filling of God the Holy Spirit is His control and guidance of the believer, which is temporary, depending on the volition (free-will) of the believer. (I Corinthians 12:13)

Our “position” *in* Christ and our “walk” *with* Christ must always be distinguished in order to avoid confusion and inaccurate interpretation. When the Bible says that we are dead to sin this is positional truth. When the Bible says to walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust (desire) of the flesh (sin nature) it is not referring to positional truth, but to experiential truth.

Eternal life is God’s life (one of His attributes) imputed to the human spirit of the believer at the moment of salvation. This imputation of eternal life occurs simultaneously with the imputation of the human spirit.

Verse 21

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

This may seem like a strange thing for John to say to close this epistle, but we must remember that the Bible is to be interpreted in the time in which it was written. In John’s day, there was widespread idol worship among all nations. The Greeks had their gods, the Romans had their gods and even some Jews participated in the practice. Therefore, it is not really that strange that John would warn the believers to whom he is writing to guard (the meaning of the word “keep”) themselves against the worship of idols.

The application for us today is to do the same. Though there may not be the same widespread worship of Greek, Roman or Hebrew idols, modern man has his idols as well. It may be power, wealth, popularity, material possessions, pleasure, another person or self. John’s point is that believers must always guard against worshipping anything except the one true God of the Bible. This means that Bible doctrine must be the number priority in the life of the believer. Bible doctrine teaches us about God’s attributes, His character and His plan for our lives. When we put anything else above learning and applying Bible doctrine we are worshipping that idol.