

Lesson for November 27, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 4:14-21

Verse 14

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son, the Savior of the World.”

We must remember that John was an eyewitness to the person and the work of Jesus Christ in the Hypostatic Union. The word *testify* in Greek is “*martureo*” and means to bear witness or to witness. As an eyewitness, John was convinced that Jesus Christ was “God in the flesh” and that He was sent to be the Savior of the world, as Christ had claimed throughout His earthly ministry. There can be no doubt that Jesus was equal with God, proceeding from God and possessing authority from God. Christ “set His face like a flint” to accomplish all that had been planned for Him in eternity past by God the Father. (Isaiah 50:6-8)

Verse 15

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God means a person is acknowledging Christ’s humanity and deity. This can be done only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The person who makes this confession is acknowledging his faith in Christ as Savior. John points out the fact of the indwelling of the Trinity and the believer’s position in Christ, which are results of this confession, confirming that he is referring to believers.

Verse 16

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath for us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

To know the love of God is possible only as the believer grows spiritually by means of the reception and retention of Bible doctrine. The truth regarding God’s love is doctrinal information, revealed by the Holy Spirit to the advancing believer. The advancing believer has learned that God’s love can be exhibited only by a believer who has developed God’s virtue in his soul. We

call God's kind of love virtue-love. Virtue-love therefore becomes a description for the Christian Way of Life. Christ summarized it for us when He quoted the Old Testament, "You shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39)

God loves His own integrity whether in Himself or in the maturing believer. Loving His own integrity establishes the potential for the believer to exhibit God's love toward others. By abiding in God's love, the believer is residing in God's plan and God the Holy Spirit is continuing to control his life.

Verse 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."

Herein means "by this." By what was stated in the previous verse (residing in God's power system under the filling of the Holy Spirit), the believer's love (personal love for God and impersonal love for others) becomes complete. The word for *perfect* in Greek is "teleios" and means to finish, to complete, to mature or to perfect.

If we reside in God's power system and continue to advance as believers, we have confidence toward God that we are moving in the right direction. The word *boldness*, "parrhesia" in Greek, means confidence and denotes an absence of fear. The believer who is advancing in his Christian life has nothing to fear from God, whether at the Judgment Seat of Christ or during his life on earth. The motivational virtue of "confidence toward God" motivates the believer to exhibit the functional virtue of "courage toward people and circumstances." The reason we can develop these virtues is that Jesus Christ developed the same virtues and utilized them to the maximum in His humanity. Now we, under the control of the Holy Spirit, can do the same.

Verse 18

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

If the believer is residing in virtue-love (perfect love) he is being controlled by God the Holy Spirit and residing in God's power system. Within this system fear cannot exist, because there is only confidence and courage within God's system. The opposite of courage is uncontrolled fear. Fear, which is an emotional sin,

destroys love because it destroys virtue and brings with it self-induced misery. *Torment* in Greek (the word from which we get the idea of self-induced misery) is “kolasis” and means “punishment.” The fearful person is punishing himself. If, as a believer, you are confident in God’s attributes and character, you can remain “stress-free” and “fear-free” as a result. Though the pressures of life surround you, your confidence is in God, not yourself or others. As you think Bible doctrine, which must be resident in your soul, you are able to draw doctrinal conclusions and utilize the problem-solving device of Faith-Rest to overcome fear and avoid self-induced misery. If, on-the-other-hand, you fall apart, become fearful and worried when tragedy strikes, you have not matured into a lifestyle of virtue-love.

Verse 19

“We love Him, because He first loved us.”

John mentioned the pattern for virtue-love, the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in verse seventeen. In verse nineteen John takes us back to the ultimate source of virtue-love, God.

In eternity past God knew all the knowable, which means He knew the personal sins that we would commit and yet He loved us unconditionally. God is able to love the sinner, because of who and what He is, from His own integrity. We can see from this verse, that Jesus Christ had integrity as deity, which became the pattern of integrity in His humanity, under the control of the Holy Spirit, as He was able to avoid all categories of sin. How do we exhibit integrity? We do it by following Christ’s example; not as impeccable human beings, but by allowing God the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us. We use the term impersonal love to describe this integrity and virtue of the spiritually maturing believer who is following Christ’s example.

Verse 20

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

John now gives us a hypothetical story to demonstrate the principle he has just outlined in the previous verses. If a believer alleges to love God and yet he hates his fellow believer, he is said to be a liar. Personal love for God must always precede impersonal love for others. A believer, who is out of fellowship with God through overt or mental attitude sin, has given up the control of

his life to his sin nature and Satan's cosmic system. At this point, functional virtue is no longer operational in his life and he is unable to love his fellow believers or anyone else. This hypothetical believer not only ceases to exhibit impersonal love, he hates his fellow believer. Hatred often comes as a result of staying out of fellowship with God for a prolonged period of time. In a state of reversionism, the believer has removed himself from God's power system and is living a lie in Satan's counterfeit system. He is living a lie because he is, in reality, a member of the Royal Family of God. (John 8:44)

The malfunction and lack of impersonal love has turned to hatred, a mental attitude sin, and has caused this believer to lose the filling (control) of the Holy Spirit, which results in making false claims about loving his fellow believers. John says that it is impossible to love God and not love others as a result. This believer's claim to love others (who he can see) is negated by the fact that he does not love God (Who he cannot see). His claim is proven to be false. John's point is that you must develop a love for God *before* you can love others.

Verse 21

“And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

John reminds us of a commandment from God to love Him and to love one another. This is not accomplished by simply telling yourself that you are going to do this or by saying “I love you brother.” You do not automatically love God or other believers after salvation. Loving God means developing integrity and virtue as a result of the intake and application of accurate Bible doctrine over a period of time. In order to learn Bible doctrine the believer must approach God with humility. Humility means the believer is teachable. At first humility may have to be enforced. This means that you may have to force yourself to submit to the authority and mentorship of the Holy Spirit or to the authority of a pastor/teacher within the local church. After time logged in the Word of God, enforced humility should become genuine. As you learn and apply doctrines, such as, Grace Orientation, Doctrinal Orientation and A Personal Sense of Destiny, your love for God and His Word will no longer have to be enforced; you will be motivated by your personal love for God. This motivation will become functional as impersonal (unconditional) love for all mankind.