



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Biblical Maturity 1 John 2:12-14

MAY 15, 2014

Bob Lewis / 267-278-1992 / Bob.Lewis@capitolcom.org

In our portion of 1st John for consideration today, John lays out what might be called a progressive pattern for growth in The Faith.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1Jo 2:12-14 ESV)

Previously, our focus was on how to determine the genuineness of one's profession of The Faith.

What evidences need be considered so as to evaluate the genuineness of an individual's assertion.

We suggested two tests from John's argument: 1) a test of doctrine and, 2) a test of duty.

In terms of the Doctrinal aspect: what does the one asserting possession of The Faith understand and hold to in terms of 1) The deity of Christ and, 2) The status of mankind before God?

Does the one asserting The Faith believe Jesus is God in the Flesh? Does the one asserting The Faith believe mankind has been stained by the sin of Adam?

As we consider the Apostle's order of focus, we note Doctrine, or a particular teaching, precedes and informs performance of one's Duty. Christianity is a two-fold consideration; on the one hand it is a relationship with a person, the person of Jesus the Christ.

On the other hand, it is a philosophy, a belief system, a worldview anchored in an absolute morality in contrast with most other belief systems.

If we apply that order to our lives, we will note a change begins to occur in our own being as the doctrine informs and forms our own character. This is pointedly illustrated by a statement from the epistle/letter to The Hebrews where the writer states:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb. 4:12

We then are presented with the following order in terms of discipleship: Know (knowledge content) Be (character), Do (conduct).

Such is the reality of Christianity, a doctrine grounded in and informed by a particular objective teaching in contrast to a solely subjective experience.

In terms of the behavioral aspect, we are to orient our focus on the test of Love: love toward God and Love toward one's neighbor.

In verse 5 of chapter 2 John suggests one's love as a believer is "made perfect" (i.e. brought to maturity) if he/she keeps His commandments.

All of which to say, there is a progression to one's spiritual development.

Pragmatically speaking, God could have, at the moment of conversion, reached down, unscrewed the top of one's head, taken out the brain, washed it clean of any and every erroneous and anti-God concept, placed in its stead correct thoughts, etc. returned it to its proper place, closed up the wound, theoretically returning to a pre-Fall state. (Now, wouldn't that have been sweet!)

But, such has not been the focus of His plan.

Instead, it has been His plan for one's progress in The Faith to be developmental, just as in Israel's history: *"For it is precept upon precept, precept upon*

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, STAFF, LOBBYISTS: THURS..AT 1215-1245 HOURS-LOCATION 2ND FLOOR SENATE CONF. ROOM

Delaware

Biblical Maturity 1 John 2:12-14

precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." (Isa 28:10 ESV).

As we read the history of the nation of Israel in the wilderness and subsequently in the reigns of Kings, we note progress, retrogression, return and progress til the final judgment (Matt. 21:43ff).

In today's segment, 2:12-14 it would seem John is suggesting a spiritual developmental progression.

Children, Young Men, Fathers.

Biologically and psychologically we resonate with the suggestion.

Spiritually, it seems to make sense as well.

When one is "born from above", one enters the kingdom of God, the kingdom of light, with one's thinking and manner of life already formed by the "alien" kingdom.

This is suggested by the Apostle Paul in two different epistles writing to two different groups of believers; one in Rome and the other in modern day Turkey:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Eph. 4:23,24

Here in this portion of John, 2:12-14 we see him suggesting three possible stages of a believer's maturation process: 1) Infancy, 2) adulthood and, 3) senior citizen.

We see this exemplified in John's life when we recall his childish response to those who were unwilling to accept Jesus' teaching (Luke 9:54) as compared to his current and mature concern for and care of this group. The love of God, poured out on John's heart (Romans 5:5) has been brought to a state of maturity.

It is the will of God for each believer to progress in The Faith (2 Peter 3:18 and Acts 20:32).

And the means for bringing this growth to pass is, as indicated in verse 14, the word of God. From spiritual infancy throughout the senior years of one's walk of faith, the word of God is the key. Jesus implied it clearly during His bout with the wicked one while in the desert testing when he said:

But he answered, "It is written, "' Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matt. 4:4

Sadly, far too many believers fail to grow and the marks of spiritual immaturity are quite obvious: they are "dull of hearing", unskilled in the word of righteousness, and unable to teach correctly.

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Heb. 5:11-14

Application

Here is a practical 7 step guide to growth in the word of God:

- 1) Hear it (Luke 11:28)
- 2) Read it (Rev. 1:3)
- 3) Study it (2 Tim. 2:15)
- 4) Memorize it (Psalm 119:9, 11)
- 5) Meditate on it (Col. 3:16)
- 6) Apply it to your life. (James 1:22)
- 7) Share it with others (this is the teaching and reproducing aspect. (2 Tim. 4:2)