

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 51 (December 15-21, 2013)

This Christmas, my challenge to you is to allow God to move you much deeper into the riches of His love and grace. I can think of no better way to accomplish this goal than a continued study of the epistle of 1 John.

Sunday -- December 15 (1 John 3:1-6)

I often quote verses 1-3 as I preach His Word because I do not feel like many professing Christians understand the privilege we have as **children of God**. Because we are His children, we are **heirs** of God and **joint-heirs** with Jesus (see Romans 8:16-17). We have been **adopted** into the family of God (see Ephesians 1:5) and given all the rights of His true Son, Jesus (v. 1). Since we are **already** children of God (v. 2), on the Day we see the Lord face to face, we will have new bodies like His glorious body (see Philippians 3:21). Isn't this enough to challenge you to seek to be like Him now in purity (v. 3)? If you answered, "yes," to that question, you are ready to deal with the next few verses. John makes three statements in verses 4-5 with which no Christian will disagree. **His** righteousness is not in dispute, nor is the **reason He came** into the world (v. 5) or his **definition of sin** (v. 4). It is the statement in verse 6 that causes us to flinch. We will begin with that truth in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday -- December 16 (1 John 3:6-10)

We must learn to distinguish between **willful sins** and "**oops**" sins (see Psalm 19:12-13). Jesus took care of the latter category on the cross when He said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). This includes all the acts we do prior to understanding the clear Biblical teachings on the subject. In today's text, John is talking about **willful, defiant** sins, which, because the Holy Spirit lives in him/her, no true believer should constantly commit. The acts you used to **enjoy** prior to receiving salvation become repulsive to the Holy Spirit living in you. When you do "slip up" and return to an old sin, the Holy Spirit is present to convict you of that sin and lead you to seek forgiveness from God (read 1:9 & 2:1). We all fall short of the glory of God on a daily basis, but none of us should use the **grace** of God as a license to continue sinning (see Jude 1:4). Freedom from the **power** of sin is one of the gifts that often remain unopened under the tree of Calvary. Open yours today!

Tuesday -- December 17 (1 John 3:6-10)

Some preachers have not chosen to teach the need for personal holiness (v. 7), because it is not a popular subject in today's permissive society. I want you to read this entire text again today because it is so important to your life in Christ. Jesus has already paid the **penalty** for sins, but now He wants to deliver you from the **power** of sin. John clearly teaches that a person who has no conviction about the sins in his/her life is not truly born again. This entire passage proclaims this powerful truth! Many churches have changed their standards to allow men and women with sinful lifestyles to be welcomed into full **membership** and **leadership**, but that does not change the Word of God. Everyone is welcome to come to worship with the Body of Christ, but those who truly receive Him must be willing to turn away from sins (see 2 Timothy 2:19). If our country continues to spiral down the Godless path we're on, soon it will be against the law to preach against certain sins, but that will not release the minister from his/her responsibility (see Ezekiel 3:16-21). May God help us to "speak the truth in love" (see Ephesians 4:15).

Wednesday -- December 18 (1 John 3:11-15)

John gives us some insight into one of the oldest Biblical stories by referencing the actions of Cain and Abel (see Genesis 4:1-16). God's Word teaches the **need for love** from Genesis to Revelation, but the apostle now wants you to understand the **necessity of love** (v. 11). Cain knew that God required a **blood sacrifice**, which foreshadows Jesus' death on the cross (see Hebrews 9:22), but he chose to bring Him **vegetables** instead (Genesis 4:3). Therefore, God rejected Cain's offering because it pictured **his own works** instead of the **work of the Lord** (v. 12). The world will hate anyone who lives by God's standards because these standards go against the popular goal of high self-esteem for everyone, regardless of performance. The Lord's clear teaching is this: No true child of God can harbor jealousy and hatred in his/her heart for his Christian brother/sister because, in the Lord's eyes, it is the same as actual murder (v. 14-15). Examine yourself today in light of this Scripture!

Thursday -- December 19 (1 John 3:16-20)

Today's text challenges us to let go of our own possessions when a **Christian brother/sister** is in need. The early Church was governed by a rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Because of this written criteria, it was easy to separate those who needed help from those looking for a handout. Today's church gets many calls from outsiders looking for help on electricity bills and rent. The callers usually state: "That's what a church is for, you know." Just like in the days of the early Church, it is easy to determine the needs of members **inside** the church. It is much tougher to know which people we can help from the many **outside** requests. We certainly do not want to spend God's offering to buy drugs and alcohol and tattoos, but we also do not want to be hardhearted when there is a legitimate need. The text implies that our **hearts** may feel guilty when we turn someone down (v. 19-20). I can testify to that. However, if in doubt, we need to err on the side of **mercy** and **grace**. Just a thought: Perhaps we should refuse to pay bills for anyone who will not allow us to present the gospel and pray for them as well.

Friday -- December 20 (1 John 3:21-24)

We ended yesterday's devotion by saying that the heart, using mercy and grace, will tell us what to do for those who are **outside** the church family (v. 19-20). John follows this with one of the great promises that he personally heard Jesus say **seven times** on the last night of His life (v. 21-22; see also John 14:13,14; 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24, 26). John reminds you of the two keys to success in prayers: 1) ask in His Name, and 2) obey His commands (v. 22-23). How can we know that Christ lives in us to give us such confidence? We know it because the **Spirit** is alive causing us to have a desire to live for Jesus (v. 24). That same Spirit teaches us His will, His Word and His way. Are you anxious to live your life for God's glory? If so, all the resources of Heaven are available to you (see Ephesians 1:3).

Saturday -- December 21 (1 John 4:1-6)

God's Word warns us against being naive about the teachings of the false prophets (v. 1). The people who deny the **deity of Jesus Christ** are false prophets, no matter how sincere they may be. Some religious cults deny the Trinity in their teachings. Do not allow such false teachers to come into your home (see 2 John 1:10-11). John uses the deity of Christ as a litmus test for true Christianity (v. 2-3). How do you stand up to that test? Do you know for sure that Jesus is God in human flesh? If not, memorize John 1:14 so that you can take a stand against doubters. God wants you to know that His presence in you makes you stronger than Satan or any of his false teachers (v. 4). As I have warned you throughout these devotions, the time has come for you to understand the **Biblical** worldview so that you can stand up against the **politically correct** worldview (v. 5-6). Pray for Spiritual power! God will definitely answer that prayer!