

Sent: Thursday, October 08, 2015 6:28 AM
Subject: Tuesday Nite's (October 6th) MOB Study

John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, continued his address (in I John 2:12-17) to believers and followers of Jesus Christ, first with words of assurance and affirmation (vs. 12-14). He chose special words for those in three distinct stages of their "walk" with the Lord: first for "little children"--those new believers who "have their sins forgiven for His name's sake, and know the Father"; then, to "fathers" who "know Him who is from the beginning" (a reference to Jesus Christ as God Incarnate); and finally to "young men" who he said "are strong, and abide in the Word of God, and have overcome the evil one!" Each of John's characterizations of these three distinct groupings of believers is significant!

First of all, they're all, collectively, the "children of God," in the sense that they're part of the family of God. John marvels at, and extols, their position and status as believers with his comment in 3:1: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are!" I like the King James Version which states: "Behold! What manner of love...!" There's a certain amazement, and exhilaration, expressed by John, and conveyed to us, that ordinary people, such as we! Should have this high distinction! Call it "amazing grace"!

But back to the passage in verses 12-14! For new believers, in particular, just to realize that their sins have been forgiven, and that they now have a new relationship, and fellowship, with the God of the Universe! Wow! That's where the Christian life begins--and it already took place with both the "fathers" and the "young men"!

As for the "fathers"--they understand something highly important that every Christian needs to realize and fully understand, contrary to false teachers who in that day, and in our day too--dare to question, and even deny, some of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, including the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Deity of Christ! Jesus Christ is "from the beginning" in the sense that He was and is part of the eternal Godhead! And as John made clear in His gospel, Jesus was with God, and was God, and "became flesh" to give His life on the Cross and become the "propitiation" for our sins (I John 2:2)--and thus be able to provide a way that we could become "children of God!" The "father" reference suggests a certain maturity based on years of fellowship and "walking with the Lord!"

As for the "young men"! They're the ones who have "overcome" the evil one, because they were "strong"--and they were strong because "the Word of God "abided" in them! This is the very essence of living a victorious Christian life--which is why we believe it's so important that we gather together to study the Bible! Jesus seems to have this very thought in mind in His "intercessory prayer" to the Father, just prior to the Cross, when he prayed (in John 17:15-17): "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one! They are not of this world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth!"

Well, all of that precedes the rest of our text in verses 15-17, where John gives a very solemn command to Christians in all stages of their spiritual life--and for all ages of time! And it's summed up in the words: "Stop loving the world!" And that requires some interpretation! And lots of help!

The "world" he's referring to is not the physical world--which, although greatly tarnished by sin and the fall, still portrays the beauty and wonders of His creation! Nor is it the world of people--

which He came to save, and to which we're called to love! He is referring to the invisible, spiritual world system, dominated by Satan, the "evil one"! It's a world that not only "lies in the power of the evil one" (5:19), but one that is "hostile toward God" (James 4:4); "blinds the minds of the unbelieving" (II Cor. 4:4); and "corrupts the world by lust" (II Pet. 1:4).

John describes it this way: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is not of the Father, but is from the world!" These are variously described as the unbridled desire for physical pleasures outside the bounds of God's plan; excessive fascination with alluring things; and deep yearning for recognition, power, and self-gratification! They can be defined in other ways, of course, but, for the believer, they basically include anything that causes us to lose our love for God, or our responsiveness to the will of God for our lives!

The reality is that even as believers--and, in fact, often particularly as believers--we're faced with these alluring enticements! Satan used these to deceive Adam and Eve in the garden, and tried similar tactics with Jesus in the wilderness! And we know the sad stories of Lot and others in the Old Testament account, and still others we witness in our present world!

So why do we need to stop loving the world--and how do we do it?

The number one reason for not loving, and becoming "caught up" in, this kind of world, according to John, is that it distances us from God, our Father! John writes: "If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us!" Matthew 6:24 puts it this way: "No man can have two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other..."

The good news is that, as believers, we've been "rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13). The Apostle Paul also writes in Philippians 3:20 that, "our citizenship is in heaven..." And, most encouragingly, John assures us (in 1 John 4:4) that "greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world!" We don't have to be victims of Satan's attacks!

And how can we do this? Among other things, we can go back to what John said in verse 12-14 of our text--particularly about the "young men" who overcame the evil one! By being strong in the Lord and by "abiding" in the Word! In commenting on these verses, Jamieson, Faucett, and Brown, in their commentary write: "Having once overcome the world that "lieth in the power of the wicked one, don't go back! Carry forth the conquest!" Paul instructs us in Romans 12:9 to actually "abhor what is evil and cling to what is good!"

And we don't go back, as Wiersbe notes, because of who we are! Children of God! And because of where the world is going! Verse 17 of our text says: "it's passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever!"

The great missionary martyr Jim Elliot once wrote: "He is no fool who lives for what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose!"

There's more! On to Lesson #4, covering I John 2:17-29!

Have a great week, men!
Lowell