

Lessons From I John

Christian Development

(I Jn 2:12-14)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of "Lessons From I John."
 - a. We looked last week at "Walking With Jesus."
 - b. We will be looking today at what John writes concerning "Christian Development."
3. Christian Development
 - a. This isn't as simple as some try and make it.
 - i. The concept yes the reality no.
 - b. There is a lot that goes into developing as one should and there are a lot of obstacles that can hinder us from developing as we should.
4. With this in mind I think John, inspired by God, put forth the goal of growth for every Christian.

I. Babes In Christ

- A. Your sins are forgiven
 1. The first and most important step was having ones sins removed.
 - i. This is done by obeying God's plan of Salvation.
 2. It is here that one become clean and pure.
 - i. **Is 1:18** "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."¹
 3. It is here that one becomes a "new creation."
 - i. **II Co 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
- B. You know the Father
 1. As pure and innocent infants in Christ we have fellowship with God.
 - i. Babes in Christ now have a relationship with the Father and are now walking with Him.
 - a. **I Jn 1:6-7** "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

Lessons From I John

- C. The difficulties of being babes in Christ
1. Parable of the sower and the seed.
 - i. **Mt 13:3-7** "And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them."
 2. Notice the things that hinder young Christians.
 - i. First tribulations and persecutions wither the rootless.
 - a. **Mt 13:20-21** "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."
 - b. Remember that Satan comes harder at new Christians than they ever had before because he no longer has them in his grasp.
 1. This is why we find ourselves going through so many difficulties as new Christians.
 - ii. Second the cares of the world choke out the growing.
 - a. **Mt 13:23** "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."
 - b. This is hard as we grow so accustomed to the world that we look to it as comfort because of its familiarity.
 1. This is why we find it so difficult to hand in the beginning many times.
 3. How babes in Christ can prevent themselves from falling away and allow themselves to develop to a more mature state.
 - i. First make roots in God's Word.
 - a. This means developing a hunger and thirst for the Word of the Lord.
 1. **Is 55:1-2** "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."
 - b. It means understanding the importance of God's Word.
 1. **Ps 119:105** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Lessons From I John

- ii. Second remove the cares of this world.
 - a. This means flee them and not associate with them.
 1. **II Ti 2:22** "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
 - b. It means understanding the dangers of this world.
 1. **II Pt 2:19-20** "...For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."
- iii. The only way babes in Christ can survive is by relying on Christ and not the world. The world will fail the babe in Christ every time whereas God will not.

II. Youths In Christ

- A. You have overcome the evil one
 1. Moving from babes in Christ to "young" Christians means a great deal.
 - i. As we saw in the parable of the sower and the seed, it is not an easy task to accomplish.
 - ii. Of those that become Christians and thus babes in Christ only 1/3rd actually make it this far.
 - a. Subsequently 2/3rd do not.
 2. Moving from babes to young Christians means that we "have overcome the evil one."
 - i. This doesn't mean we cannot fall.
 - a. **Ga 6:1** "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."
 - b. **Ga 5:4** "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (NKJV)
 - ii. It does mean we have done what was mentioned earlier...we have fled from evil.
 - a. **II Ti 2:22**
 3. Making it from babes to youth is a great accomplishment.
 - i. How do we know we have matured to youth...
- B. You have the Word abiding in you
 1. There is a big difference between knowing God's Word and knowing how to apply God's Word because it abides in you.
 - i. **Co 3:16** "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..."
 2. When the Word of Christ dwells in us we are able to fend off the fiery darts of Satan, because the Word is our defense.
 - i. **Ep 6:10-11** "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

Lessons From I John

3. When the Word of God dwells in us we are able to cut down Satan because the Word is our offense as well.
 - i. **II Co 10:4-6** "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete."
 - ii. **Ja 4:7** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- C. We know we have matured thus then...
 1. When we overcome the evil one by outlasting his attacks and then making him run.
 2. However we still can mature from youths to adults...

III. Adults In Christ

- A. You know Him who is from the beginning
 1. As babes in Christ we can know the Father.
 2. As adults in Christ we can know Christ.
 - i. It seems to be Christ under consideration because of the "from the beginning" statement.
 - a. **Jn 1:1-2** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God."
- B. The difference between knowing the Father and knowing Christ.
 1. "As babes in Christ, it can be said that even in our infancy we can "know" the Father, that is have an intimate relationship with Him and experience the eternal life which He gives" (Sermon: Three Stages In The Christian Live, by Copeland, Mark)
 2. "But only with time, and with opportunity to "walk just as He walked" (1Jn 2:6), can it be said that one has truly come to "know" Jesus" (Ibid)
- C. This is why Jesus could say things like...
 1. **Lk 12:51-53** "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."
 2. **Mt 16:24** "...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
- D. Knowing Jesus means walking with Jesus
 1. **Mt 5:10-12** "'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Lessons From I John

- E. That is why Peter wrote what he wrote, inspired by God
1. That we need to grow in the knowledge of our Lord.
 - i. **II Pt 3:18** "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."
 2. That growth in knowledge about Christ only comes as we develop the "Christ-like" graces.
 - i. **II Pt 1:5-8** "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CONCLUSION

1. As we grow let us keep in mind one very important fact...we cannot go from infant to adult in a short period of time.
 - a. It takes an infant some twenty years to reach adulthood, yet often times we think we should be adults in Christ in a matter of weeks.
 - b. Everybody is different spiritually speaking as far as their maturing to adulthood is considered.
 - i. What we have to make sure of is that we are not "stunting" our growth but rather cultivating it.
2. Question: Where am I in my spiritual maturity and what am I doing to continue to grow?
 - a. We never stop growing and maturing here on earth. Let it be said of each of us that we are striving to grow leaps and bounds for our God who loves us so much.
3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**