

Loved and Loving Johns Epistles Lesson 5 3Q 2009

Walking in the Light: Renouncing Worldliness

SABBATH

Read memory text – thoughts?

What do you think John means by “the world”?

Read all four paragraphs beginning “In 1933...” thoughts?

Is it true that this world, as we currently know it, is temporary? What is the benefit in realizing this? What is the danger in forgetting this?

- Benefit in remembering
 - Our pain, trials, suffering will end
 - Hope for a better future
 - Keep a larger perspective
 - Avoid exchanging life for death
- Danger in forgetting
 - Narrows our view
 - Falsely think our trials will never end
 - Increased discouragement
 - Accept temporal rewards which destroy the soul

What about the idea of being rescued from death, are there some things worse than death? When Patrick Henry said, “Give me liberty or give me death” was he overstating it?

What would be worse than death? What about living in a universe governed by Satan?

Does God want to rescue us from death? How does God rescue us from death? Are there theories told about God that actually make His rescue from death sound worse than death itself? In other words do some of the theories on the plan of salvation

teach loss of liberty, that God is the great policeman in the sky?

SUNDAY

Read 1John 2:12 at the top of the lesson – thoughts?

What does “His name sake” mean?

“Name” in Hebrew culture carried character connotations. So what does it mean that our sins are forgiven us for His character’s sake? Does it mean that God’s forgiveness is a revelation of His character, who He is, that it is not dependent upon us, but upon God? What do we learn about God that He forgives?

Read dark section in top third beginning, “In 1John 2:12...” thoughts?

What is the basis of our forgiveness? God’s character or Christ’s death – is there a difference? Can God extend forgiveness from heaven without the death of Christ or is God prohibited, prevented, obstructed from forgiving, in His heart, without the death of Christ? In other words, was the death of Christ necessary to get forgiveness into God’s heart?

Read paragraph “John wants his hearers...”

Does God’s extension of forgiveness, (God having a forgiving heart), equal salvation? Is our assurance based on knowing we are forgiven or is it in knowing God?

Forgiveness can be used to mean two different things. It can mean the forgiving attitude of the offended person, or it can be used to mean the entire experience of reconciliation and regeneration. In the Bible it is often employed to mean the entire experience of reconciliation and regeneration, but today we almost always hear it as the forgiving attitude of the person

who was offended. What is the danger in hearing it in this way?

The lesson suggests we examine several texts:

- God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Acts 5:31

Thoughts? What is Christ doing? Giving repentance and forgiveness to His children, NOT paying God to get God to forgive!

- For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:13, 14

How is forgiveness used in this passage? What is the dominion of darkness? What is the kingdom of the Son he loves? What does it mean “in whom we have redemption”?

Read Col 2:8-15

- See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with

its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col 2:8-15

What are the traditions and basic principles of this world? Remember we are not to love the world or the things in the world – what are we not to love? What are the principles of the world? The world is based on survival of the fittest, selfishness, getting yours at the expense of others. Is the world based on love and forgiveness or on vengeance, appeasement, payment for one's debts? Is not the world focused on saving self, getting exonerated, getting its records expunged?

Would teachings about our forgiveness which suggest that Jesus had to pay our legal debt be in keeping with God's character or be based on the traditions and basic principles of the world?

When did God forgive us our sins? What did Christ do for us? Do you hear legal pardon or regeneration, recreation, healing?

What does it mean He “disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”?

What authorities and powers? Satan and his evil host, Christ disarmed, took away their weapons, what are Satan's weapons? How did Christ disarm them at the cross?

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2Cor 10:3-5

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Heb 2:14, 15

What are Satan's weapons? Lies, fear, selfishness and death.

Christ disarmed Satan at the cross because Christ:

- Revealed the truth which destroys all Satan's lies
- Restored God's law of love perfectly into humanity, thereby destroying death (2Tim 1:10)

Read first sentence last paragraph, "The crucial point..." absolutely true, why?

MONDAY

Read second paragraph "When the young men..." thoughts? Who overcame Satan? How is Christ's victory going forward? How do we experience Christ's victory in our lives?

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "The term *kosmos*..."

Thoughts? What do you think about the tension the lesson highlights?

Does God love the world yet we are not to love the world or does the word "world" mean two different things in these passages?

What are we not to love? Pride, selfishness, self-exaltation, lust, greed, sensualism, exploitation of others, arrogance, lies, deception, violence, cruelty, inhospitality, perversion. In other words we are not to love all the sickness sin has caused the world. Does God love all of this?

Does God love the people of the earth, all of us who are suffering under the weight of sin? Does God love the animals of the earth and all of nature which is also suffering under the weight of sin? Are we to love the people and God's creation? Yes! Is there really any tension here at all or complete harmony?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "While verse 15..." thoughts?

Did God create us in the condition we are in, infected with sin, lustful, prideful and greedy? Is John warning us against God's design for humanity, against how God designed mankind in Eden to be? What is John warning us against? The infection which is destroying God's design, what is that infection? How does it impact our lives?

This week one of our online listeners emailed me. He participates in an online discussion forum and someone posted the following and he wanted my thoughts on it:

As we've observed so often, understanding sin is absolutely essential if we're to see the truth of the atonement. Seeing God as imposing a penalty for sin inevitably places him in a wrong light. If however sin has its own consequence, a natural "penalty," then God is experiencing that in Jesus on the cross.

The reason why there's so much confusion and debate over how God makes us right is that we fail to understand what went wrong in the first place. Ideas of payment and propitiation assume that God imposed a penalty on sin. Ideas of substitution assume that God demands a death before he can forgive sin. Ideas of "infusion" of some spiritual "substance" assume that sin is an actual object that can be dealt with, or that sin is

some metaphysical dirt that must be mechanically washed away.

All these concepts are wrong because they see sin wrongly. Sin is not some object--not dirt, nor a pathogen, not a disease agent or whatever. Sin cannot be weighed by the pound or physically observed. Sin is the broken relationship--that is the key. Only as we accept this understanding can such confusion be cleared up, since the answer to a broken relationship is a restored relationship. We may think that to call sin a disease is helpful, but even here we can be mistaken because then we think that what needs to happen is to provide some kind of antidote or antivirus, whatever. No—sin is only a disease metaphorically--you can't see sin under a microscope!

Thoughts? Below is the response I sent:

The writer is correct in that seeing God imposing penalties is erroneous and that sin has its own natural penalty.

However, I think the writer does not communicate the issues at stake and has created his own straw man of physical pathogens to shoot down. An infection of a computer by a virus cannot be seen under a microscope, but we all know that there is something very real in the system that is not supposed to be there that interferes with normal functioning. Our minds are like this. We have been infected with lies about God, which caused a change in our base functioning. This pathological change had to be reversed and Christ came to do this in addition to reveal the truth.

Where the writer is correct is from the perspective of the sinner. We sinners, in order to be saved have only to return to trust in God. He will take care of the rest. We don't have to understand anything that God needed to

accomplish in order to restore us to oneness with Him and eternally save us. But we do have to trust Him. A child with terminal illness doesn't have to understand how they got sick, what the sickness is doing on a molecular level, how the antidote was achieved or works, but the child does have to trust the doctor and follow the prescription. The writer is trying to simplify Christianity for people who have been confused by all the legal distortions and to get people to return to trust in God. He is absolutely right in doing this, for this is the only essential thing we must do – trust God and follow where He leads– in order to be saved.

But I think the writer errs when he attempts to describe the plan of salvation from what God had to accomplish to bring about our healing. God had to do more than merely reveal the truth to win us to trust. Christ came to absolutely reveal the truth to destroy Satan's lies and win us to trust, but Christ came to do more. He came to "destroy" death, the devil and Satan's work (2Tim 1:10, Heb 2:14, 1John 3:8). This He did by taking our infirmities (condition) upon Himself and "developing perfect character" in His human brain. This He did by restoring the law of life (love) perfectly back into the human species. The writer fails to communicate the actual construction parameters for life, which is perfect harmony with the law of love. Jesus came to restore this as well. I like how it is stated in Desire of Ages:

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human

character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Notice that the law does not require penalty or payment or appeasement, which is exactly what the writer is saying. So he is correct on this point. But what the law does require the writer leaves out. He says only a relationship is required, but what the restored relationship (i.e. restored trust in God) results in is the reproduction of Christlike character within the believer. This is accomplished because we actually receive what Christ accomplished His perfect character. This free gift is not applied to record books in heaven and the writer is correct in rejecting such "legal" transactions. This free gift is applied to our actual minds, hearts, characters. The very thought processes of our individuality is rewritten to be loving rather than selfish and this is all accomplished through the template of Jesus' perfect victory accomplished in His human brain.

Read bottom paragraph "The idea of..." thoughts? Absolutely true that our lives originate from God and we are totally dependent upon Him for our existence and thus should be humble. But the lesson states, "As sinful, fallen beings whose very existence depends totally upon the grace and beneficence of our God..." What about the sinless angels in heaven, where does their very existence arise or depend? Does our existence depend on the grace and beneficence of God only because we are sinful? Or does all life depend on God's grace and beneficence? Why?

Is there a difference in our life depending upon God's grace and beneficence and the lives of unfallen angels?

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph “In 1John 2:8...” thoughts? Will the world’s problems be solved by political solutions? Why or why not?

What does that mean for where we should spend our energy? Should Christians get caught up in the political fray? If we want to expedite the healing of the world where should we spend our energy? What is the final message of mercy to lighten the world (COL 4:15)?

Would Satan want Christians to become political? Why? What are we focusing on if we become political? Is it not the world? What methods are used to achieve political goals? Are they the methods of God? What happens to our character when we employ methods of coercion, manipulation, misrepresentation, pressure, deceit, compromise of principle?

What are we not focusing on when we become political? In Christ’s day were there humanitarian abuses, societal injustices, human rights violations? Did Jesus or His Apostles spend time trying to change government, get the right senators elected, judges or governors appointed? No! Who did such things? Herod, Caiaphas, Annas.

How are the nations of the world represented symbolically in Scripture? As wild, ravenous beasts – why? How is God’s kingdom symbolized? There is no beast symbolizing God’s kingdom, for no earthly animal can accurately represent it! The closest is the lamb, which represents Christ - gentle, loving, trusting.

What is the mission of the church? To spread the truth about God which wins people back to trust so that they will open their hearts to God, experience the power of the Holy Spirit and be transformed back into God’s loving ideal.

Read second to last paragraph, "If the world...." Thoughts?
What about the idea that our theology must be lived? Why is it the case that we do live our theology? We become like the God we worship and admire, therefore if we worship an authoritarian god, we become like him and will practice those methods in our lives. It is only when we worship a God of love, as revealed in Jesus that we actually experience regeneration of heart, mind and character.

FRIDAY

Read questions 2,4,5 and discuss.