

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 50 (December 8-14, 2013)

We will continue in our study of my favorite book in the Bible, the epistle of 1 John. I love this book because it teaches about the importance of going beyond salvation to a life laid down for the cause of Christ. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the qualities of a mature, Spirit-filled Christian. I recommend that you commit these verses to memory.

Sunday -- December 8 (1 John 2:12)

I will spend the next three days showing you the three stages in a true Christian life. Today's verse teaches the **born again** experience that the Apostle John wrote about so clearly in the third chapter of his **gospel**. The chief characteristic of this stage is the wonderful thrill of having all of our sins forgiven on account of His name. That emphasizes the truth taught in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Because of His sacrifice of the Perfect for the sinful, God has accepted all believers and forgiven all of their sins (past, present and future). Therefore, we can stand in His presence "holy and blameless in his sight" (see Ephesians 1:4). John calls this the "**child stage**" because we must come to Him in total dependence as little children (see Matthew 18:1-2). I pray that all of you have entered that stage of **eternal salvation** through faith in Jesus, the Gift of God. We will see the next gift under His tree in tomorrow's devotions.

Monday -- December 9 (1 John 2:13a)

Once you have opened the gift of **salvation**, you should have a desire to get to **know the Father** better. As you found out yesterday, this is available only to those who have accepted His Son's death on Calvary as full payment for their sins (see John 14:6). Sadly, too many professing Christians neglect this beautiful stage of Christian growth when they should begin to win others by their faith. (That is why it is called the "**Father stage**.") Unfortunately, most new believers will not grow much in their faith until a crisis occurs (see Psalm 119:67). "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:18-20). Wow! That passage needs very little explanation! In the **Father stage**, you develop such assurance in your relationship with God that you naturally win others by your faith. Open this wonderful Gift of **assurance** and allow Him to show you His Word, His will and His way!

Tuesday -- December 10 (1 John 1:14b)

Most of you have opened the gift of **salvation** and entered the "**child**" stage. Many of you have gotten into His Word and learned to pray effectively in the "**Father**" stage and now have spiritual children (converts) of your own because of the **assurance** you possess. You are able to witness to others who need to grow up in their young faith (see 2 Peter 1:3-11). I encourage you now to seek to enter the "**young men**" (or women) phase of living for Him. It is called the **young men stage** because you are maturing, but you still have a lot to learn. When "the Word of God lives in you," you will be able to clearly answer people who question your faith (see 1 Peter 3:15-16). This will become more important in the near future when you are persecuted for your "narrow mindedness." You cannot "Pray God's Promises" (see this heading on the 2020visionministries.org website) if you do not hide His Word in your heart (see Psalm 119:11). This **new knowledge** and **confidence** comes to you when you are **filled** with the Spirit of God. Personally, I experienced the transition into this stage during the most difficult time of my life, when I thought my ministry usefulness was over. Whatever it takes, I pray that you will open this **Gift of being Spirit-filled** that was also purchased on Calvary! (Note: John uses 13b-14a to emphasize his point.)

Wednesday -- December 11 (1 John 2:15-17)

After you are filled with God's Spirit, you will understand that His Word is absolutely perfect! Today's text moves us into the next "gift" you will find under the tree (**persecution**). John amplifies the reason he is writing this epistle and the reason I am writing these devotions: You are going to have to take a stand against the politically correct worldview that is permeating society. Not many American Christians have experienced physical persecution because of their worldviews, but the time is definitely drawing near. The worldly folks desire to have instant gratification and to brag about their individual accomplishments (v. 16). I have never seen a U-Haul following a hearse so I have to accept the truth that all my possessions and worldly desires and accomplishments will be left behind (v. 17). In view of this, what is really important? Learning and knowing and doing the will of God! Jesus resisted all the temptations of Satan because He was (and is) the Word of God made flesh (see John 1:14). You can do the same if you open the Holy Spirit's gift available to you as you enter the "**young men**" phase of Christianity.

Thursday -- December 12 (1 John 2:18-19)

Although the Bible teaches many facts about an ungodly world leader who will come on the scene following the rapture of the church, John is the only writer who calls him **the antichrist** (v. 18). The **spirit** of the antichrist is already at work in this world, but the **man** will not be revealed until shortly after Jesus calls His true Church home (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). The increase of evil in our country and in our world is one of the many signs that tell us that Jesus will soon rapture His people, opening the door for the **persecutions** by the antichrist. The sad truth is that this false leader's army will include people who have labeled themselves as Christians, but who have never truly had a personal relationship with Jesus (v. 19). This is one of the strongest verses in the Bible to teach us that a true Christian is safe in God's care forever while a phony Christian will leave when persecutions begin. I pray that you are committed to the cause of Jesus Christ. Your **security** is His gift under the tree!

Friday -- December 13 (1 John 2:20-25)

In today's text, John amplifies the teaching that separates true believers from those who will follow the antichrist. His true children know that Jesus, alone, provides salvation and that His Word, alone, provides the roadmap to eternal life. The antichrist will build his kingdom on **pleasure, power and popularity** (the three temptations rejected by our Lord in Luke 4:1-13). Those who have no desire to follow the teachings of Jesus will embrace the slogan of the antichrist, "If it feels good, do it." These people, even church members, prove that they do not have the Father or the Son (v. 20-23). John gives us the clear formula for anyone who wants to be secure in his/her faith in v. 24-25. How do you measure up in light of this command? Make sure your faith is current and not a relic from the past!

Saturday -- December 14 (1 John 2:26-29)

Twenty years ago, I walked (actually stomped) out of a national convention meeting when the speaker, a seminary professor, said that Jesus didn't mention the homosexual issue because John was reclining with his head at the Lord's bosom (see John 13:23 KJV), thus implying that Jesus and John had a gay relationship. The statement was so blasphemous that I had to exit the room! I entered into the room set up for prayer at the convention (a lonely place at this gathering) and cried out to my God. I asked Him where any **evangelical** could go to school and not be exposed to this garbage. He showed me this text and reminded me that many others will try to lead me astray. Read this passage carefully for assurance as well as for conviction on remaining safe in Him. I pray it will motivate your life like it has mine!