

## 20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 52 (December 18-24, 2016)

We will continue to look at the epistle of 1 John as we move into the week of Christmas.

**Sunday**, December 18 (read 1 John 4:7-12)

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7)*

Today's text is all about the unconditional love of God. I want you to read it several times to see how you measure up against John's teachings. The apostle minces no words when he makes our love for others a litmus test for our love for God (v. 7-8). John reminds us that God willingly sent His only Son into the world to be the permanent sacrifice for our sins (v. 9), because He loved us long before we loved Him (v. 10). I suggest you read 1 Corinthians 13 to see what real unconditional love is all about. Now read the same chapter again, but this time, substitute the Name "Jesus" for the word, "love." You will see why we ought to love one another (v. 11) and how the **Spirit of Jesus** living in us will make this type of love possible.

**Monday**, December 19 (read 1 John 4:13-21)

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)*

God wants us to have **confidence** on the Day of Judgment (v. 17). How do we accomplish that? By trusting in the fact that His Spirit living in us is a deposit, guaranteeing our Heavenly Home (v. 13-16; see also Ephesians 1:13-14). We need to have no fear because Jesus paid the **penalty** for our sins: therefore, we will be judged only for the **quality of our works** (v. 18; see also 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). I hope that you will allow v. 18 to become a reality in your life. Once you realize that salvation is a **gift** from the One who died on your behalf, you can relax and know for sure that the **punishment** has already been placed on the back of Jesus, our Lord. John closes today's text with another reminder that love originates with God, not with us. Once again, he reminds us that we cannot claim to love God when we do not love our Christian brother/sister living among us (v. 19-21).

**Tuesday**, December 20 (read 1 John 5:1-5)

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His Child as well. (1 John 5:1)*

I hope you have enough time in your Christmas schedule to truly digest this text. God wants you to be an **overcomer**! John lists three ingredients to look for that will guarantee our victory over Satan's world: faith in God's Son and in the Trinity (v. 1); love for Jesus and for fellow believers (v. 2); and obedience to the commands of God (v. 3). How do you measure up to this standard? God's commands are simple when compared to the constant demands of the false religious system (v. 3; compare Matthew 23:4 to Matthew 11:30). The one who overcomes the politically correct world under Satan's control is the one who believes with his/her whole **heart** in the finished work of Jesus Christ (v. 4-5). Notice that I said **heart** and not **head**! Don't be one of those who miss Heaven by 18 inches, the distance between your head and your heart!

**Wednesday**, December 21 (read 1 John 5:6-8)

*This is the One who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* (1 John 5:6)

I would have to look a long time to find a better passage to say “**Merry Christmas.**” This text is not about the **birth** of Christ, but it is about His **baptism** and **crucifixion** (v. 6). He came by **water** when He allowed John the Baptist to baptize Him (see Matthew 3:13-17). The **Spirit** came upon Him like a dove (Matthew 3:16) and the Father spoke from Heaven saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The entire Trinity was actively present at His baptism! Jesus, of course, was faithful until **death** on the cross. That is the meaning of coming by **the blood**. So the Spirit, the water and the blood all agree that Jesus is the Promised Messiah who was to come into the world (v. 7-8). Later manuscripts include the affirmation of the Trinity in v. 7 (see NIV footnote). While this is a true and worthy statement, it did not become a part of this text until many years after John’s death. Don’t get hung up on the fact that the KJV includes this reference while you have to read the footnote to find it in the NIV. Earlier manuscripts have been located since the King James was written, but this in no way reduces the value of the world’s most popular translation.

**Thursday**, December 22 (read 1 John 5:9-12)

*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* (1 John 5:12)

The entire Trinity has testified to the fact that Jesus is God’s Son (v. 6-9). Since the Spirit lives in us, we must be active in testifying as well (v. 10). He has already taught repeatedly that a true Christian is one who has **faith**, **love** and **obedience** (see 5:1-5). Therefore, since God fills our hearts with His Spirit, we cannot help but testify to what we have **seen** and **experienced** following our conversion (see also Acts 4:20). The unmistakable bottom line is this: “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (v. 11-12). This leaves no room for salvation through any other name or any other religion. Have you committed your entire life to the One who died for your sins?

**Friday**, December 23 (read 1 John 5:13-15)

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* (1 John 5:14)

I have stated repeatedly that 1 John is my favorite book. Perhaps the main reason for such a claim is found in verse 13: “I write these things to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” I do not want to have any doubts about eternal life with Jesus. This short little book is a **graduate level course** following **Basic Christianity 101**. If you walk in the light of the teachings in 1 John, you will never need to doubt your relationship with God (1:7). Then you can come boldly before the throne of grace (see Hebrews 4:16) and ask for and receive anything according to His will (v. 14-15). Wow! Can you see why He wants you to love Him with your whole heart? There are so many unopened presents under Calvary’s tree. Plunge in and open His gift of total assurance today!

**Saturday**, December 24 (read 1 John 5:16-21)

*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.* (1 John 5:19)

John closes his epistle with a challenge to pray for one another. He mentions the one unpardonable sin (the rejection of God’s offer of salvation), but he asks us to pray about all others. If a person has rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, none of our other prayers will benefit him/her anyway. John completes his teachings with a reminder that a true believer will not live a life of habitual sin because the Holy Spirit keeps him/her safe (v. 18). He then reiterates that we are God’s children while the rest of the world is under Satan’s control (v. 19). He reminds us that Jesus, indeed, is God in the flesh and has come to reveal Himself and His Word to us (v. 20). Is there any reason why we should cling to worthless idols? (v. 21)