

From: MiniJoy@aol.com [mailto:MiniJoy@aol.com]
Subject: Last Nite's (Nov.3rd) MOB Study

Last nite we covered a beautiful text (I John 4:1-5:5) where John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, puts together three basic themes he has been developing, step by step, in his epistle--about what it means to be a "real" Christian! The three themes can be viewed as the interrelationship between (1) belief about the person and work of Jesus Christ, as well as the ministry of the Holy Spirit, (2) a special brand of love that flows naturally from the heart of one who has believed and received Christ, and become a member of God's family, and (3) a life of obedience to the commands of God, as revealed in His Word, which he (the believer) in no way finds "burdensome"! These themes are developed and explained progressively in John's writings, both in his gospel and in his epistle and, as Wiersbe notes, can be viewed as a kind of "spiritual spiral staircase."

John begins our text for last nite--and, in fact, the introduction to his epistle in chapter one--by citing the most foundational doctrinal truth of the Christian faith--which concerns the very person and work of Jesus Christ! John makes it clear, contrary to some of the heresies circulating at the time (and certainly rampant today!), that Jesus was, in fact, "God in the flesh" (signifying His Deity and Incarnation)--and that He was sent from God the Father into our world for two purposes: (1) "so that we might live through Him," (4:9) and (2) that He might be "the propitiation for our sins" (4:10). He also reiterated that God had given the Holy Spirit to abide in us and us in Him (4:13).

John's account reflects, and further explains God's great love for the world, as expressed in John 3:16--and adds that "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (4:11). And being the "propitiation for our sins" helps explain why it was necessary for Jesus to give His life and "shed His blood" on the cross as the supreme sacrifice for our sins. Wiersbe notes that His death on the cross was not an accident, but an "appointment"!

John elaborates on the kind of love that is designed to be "manifested" through us to the world, giving evidence of our having been "born of God" and thus members of the family of God. Jesus, while on earth, had "commanded" His disciples to love one another, noting that "by this all men will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:34). I John 5:1 says that "whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." It's presented as a kind of normal response of one given the "new nature." John makes it clear that we don't love to "become" children of God, but we love "because" we are children of God!

And what's more--this love is not only manifested in us, but "perfected" (or made more mature) in us, all of which gives us greater confidence in our relationship with God and a peace that "casts out fear" (4:18)! And, as Wiersbe writes, we thus become "participants in the great drama of God's love"!

And then, thirdly, if we're born of God and have the love of God in our hearts, we actually want to walk in obedience to His commands, as revealed in His Word (the Bible). And, as John says, we don't find His commandments "burdensome" (5:3)! Like the Psalmist, we now "treasure His

Word in our hearts" and desire to "walk in His ways." (Check out Psalm 119 for lots more on this kind of attitude of the believer!)

John calls those who are "born of God," and who "manifest" the love of God in their lives, and who live in obedience to His Word, as "overcomers of the world" (speaking of the "world system" under the domain of Satan)! Our memory verse for last nite (5:5) puts it this way: "Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world--even our faith!"

This same idea is presented elsewhere in Scripture! Just prior to heading to the cross, Jesus Himself said, in John 16:33: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulations, but take courage: I have overcome the world!" Paul wrote, in Romans 8:37, that "...in all these things (speaking of the persecutions he experienced), we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us..." And, in II Corinthians 2:14--"But thanks be to God, who always leads us to triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place!" Wow! Never really noticed before the second part of that verse!

And so, this is the kind of Christian maturity John is writing about! Not perfection for us in this life by a long-shot, of course--but growth in our "walk with the Lord" (through the process of sanctification) that results in peace, and the "casting out of fear," and an assurance of our salvation (and eternal life) and confidence in our relationship with God--and even a manifestation of a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him, somewhere along that "spiral staircase"!

Isn't that the kind of life to which we all aspire as true believers and followers of Christ?

I hope you were challenged as I was to make this more of a reality in our lives! Wiersbe calls it "being real"!

Well, just one more lesson in this great book of I John, covering 5:6-21--where John ends his account with some of the greatest verses on "assurance" found anywhere in the Bible. Get into it this week and join us for discussion as we conclude our study of I John!

Have a "real" great week, men!

Lowell