

Parenthood

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

"I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning." (1 John 2:13, 14)

A. The stage in which Christians are "fathers" or "mothers" in the faith:

1. The term "father" is used figuratively.
2. It refers in this passage to Christians, male and female, who have reached the highest stage of the Christian life.
3. The term "fathers" suggests:
 - a. They have had experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength).
 - b. They have produced spiritual offspring (disciples):

"I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4:14, 15)

- The older men or women ("fathers") are mature in the faith and have a long-standing relationship with Christ.
- Older adults, having known Christ for years, have developed the wisdom needed to teach young people and repeat the process (success being defined as having produced "successive" kind; again, having disciplined others).

B. They have "known Him who is from the beginning"

1. Referencing Jesus, who "was from the beginning":

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." (1 John 1:1)

"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." (1 John 5:13).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." (John 1:1, 2)

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30, 31).

2. There is a distinction being made by John:
 - a. "Little children" have known "the Father" (1 John 2:13).
 - b. "Fathers" have known "the Son" who was from the beginning (1 John 2:13, 14).
3. This can be distinguished:

a. As babes in Christ, it can be said that even in our infancy we can “know” the Father - to have an intimate relationship with Him and experience the eternal life which He gives.

b. It is only with time, and with opportunity to “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6), can it be said that a Christian has truly come to “know” 1) Therefore the admonition of Peter is:

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. ” (2 Peter 3:18)

C. These are those who have grown in:

1. Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - whose lives are filled with grace and mercy;
2. Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - whose lives are characterized by the virtues of our faith; whose knowledge comes only as they have developed the Christ-like graces found in:

2 Peter 1:5-8:

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8)

- These are those who know God;
- These are those who know that they have eternal life;
- These are those who know the reality of God in their life through faith in Christ;
- These are those who assure others that they have eternal life, and encourage them to remain in fellowship with God who is light and love;
- These are those who are overwhelmed by God’s love, and because of their confidence, pass on His love to others;
- These are those whose lives are characterized by love, grace, mercy, and truth (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:13).

While no one will ever reach God’s standard of absolute perfection from his or her own efforts, we are exhorted to grow in holiness by putting to death any sin in our hearts or minds as well as in what we say or do. However, we must realize that while this is a cooperative partnership and that we are to put forth effort, we must fully understand that it is only “by the Spirit” that we can succeed (Romans 8:13). Because the essence of the Christian life is love, our saving faith must be revealed in a transformed life. What we believe and practice determines our character; our character will determine our destiny. As we realize where we are in relationship to where God desires us to be, we can begin to realize that God will truly complete that which He has begun.

“As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” not only embraces the whole of a man’s being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.

As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called "spontaneous" and "unpremeditated" as to those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruit; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry.

Man is a growth by law, and not a creation by artifice, and cause and effect are as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and Godlike character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with Godlike thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being, if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul. That he is the maker of his character, the molder of his life, and the builder of his destiny, he may unerringly prove, if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts, tracing their effects upon himself, upon others and upon his life and circumstances, linking cause and effect by patient practice and investigation. And utilizing his every experience, even the most trivial, everyday occurrence, as a means of obtaining that knowledge of himself which is understanding, wisdom, power. In this direction is the law of absolute that "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." For only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can a man enter the door of the temple of knowledge." -James Allen

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)

No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, there is always room for growth. We must never cease becoming all that God desires.

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (2 Peter. 1:5-9)