

## **Be Diligent in Your Faith**

### **II John 7-9**

A couple of weeks ago we looked at what it means to have spiritual children. We saw that the Apostle John alluded to the fact there is a joy found in developing other believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus never intended for us to merely hold on to His truth for ourselves but through his final words to His disciples, he commanded that we GO and make other disciples.

The Apostle Paul spoke of the joy he found in seeing results from his efforts. He even called those he led to Christ, and those who he developed, he called them his joy, his reward, his crown, his pride. There is something about being involved in the process of seeing people follow Jesus. It gives purpose beyond the normal, everyday activities or chores of the day.

I think it is a testimony of God's grace, that He would be willing to use us to reach out to the world. In a book entitled, "Lost in America" the author makes an interesting observation. He states that we are in the midst of the one of the most spiritual times in history. Unfortunately, there is a buffet of various religions, thoughts, and ideas that do not point to Jesus Christ. We are no longer the authority because of our culture, but now we have to compete with Muslim's, Hindu's, Buddhists, and the New Age. But the competition isn't really a competition at all when we have truth and reality. When we have a God that is consistent and never lets us down. A God that speaks to us today, not only through manuscripts written hundreds of years ago.

But with the various religions and thoughts out there, we can't simply assume that people will hear about Jesus, but that maybe we need to be a part of that process. Think of your work place. Do know for a fact that people there know what God's plan is for them? Do they even understand what Jesus had done on their behalf? There are still a lot of people who don't know, and therefore our job as Christians is not done.

But a critical component of reaching and developing other Christians is relationships. We will never gain access into sharing truth with people unless we are willing to develop credibility with them first. A relationship where we can speak to each other honestly and with questions that help bring more clarity. I think we as Christians ask people to sign on the dotted line before they even know what the contract says. Let us be people who connect with people not simply win them over to earn another brownie point.

When we last left off, we also talked about having joy in seeing those we have brought to Christ, living in His truth. It gives a boost in our faith but the opposite can also be said. That seeing people who knew God at one point and then not living in truth can be very painful. John continues on with this thought this morning, about those who have walked away. We will be looking at **II John 7-9** which reads:

*Many deceivers have gone out in to the world. They do not believe that Jesus Christ came to earth in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and*

*an antichrist. Watch out, so that you do not lose the prize for which we have been working so hard. Be diligent, so you will receive your full reward. For if you wander beyond the teachings of Christ, you will not have fellowship with God. But if you continue in the teachings of Christ, you will have fellowship with both the Father and the Son.*

John begins this morning by making a similar statement that he made in I John. We have looked at this idea also in the book of Jude.

### **1. Beware of antichrists**

All through Scripture we find the warning that there are those who will try to either discredit the work of Jesus saying that we wasn't a human being, that he wasn't real, that he didn't die, that he didn't rise again from the dead, that he was just a good person with a lot of good ideas, and the list can go on and on, or these individuals will be presenting ideas or concepts of God that are not true at all. They present Jesus as this idea or a fable, thus taking away his deity.

These individuals go completely against Jesus and his work on the cross. Antichrists are not only teachers of these ideas but they are also those who have embraced their teachings as well. The Apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia because antichrist activity was taking place. He wrote in **Galatians 1:6-8**:

*I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who in his love and mercy called you to share the eternal life he gives through Christ. You are already following a different way that pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ. Let God's curse fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other message than the one we told you about. Even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be forever cursed. I will say it again: If anyone preaches any other gospel than the one you welcomed, let God's curse fall upon that person. Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant.*

Why would people embrace false teaching over truth? I think the key is in the words of Paul in the last verse we just read. I think people embrace false teaching or teach false doctrine because they want to please people. In **Acts 20:30** Paul told the Ephesian Leaders:

*Even some of you will distort the truth in order to draw a following.*

There is something about Christianity that scares people. There is something about following Jesus that turns people off. Could it be commitment? Could it be that there are things that God requires of us that we aren't willing to give up? Could it be that our

salvation is based on someone else's ability rather than our own. Could it be that we are required to give up control of our lives to serve God?

Instead of turning to the truth and reality of God, people flock to ideas and concepts that they want to hear or like to hear even though their teaching has nothing to do with God. It is amazing to me how many religions focus so much on what we can achieve instead of resting in God's provision for us. There is no way we can earn our way into heaven. There is no task or work good enough for us to guarantee us a spot with God. The Bible tells us that we are saved by grace through faith or trust in God and nothing else

Do not follow one who will merely make Jesus a fairy tale. Don't let them make you believe that Jesus is a fairy tale. Trust in the truth of God and his Son, as is laid out in the Scriptures.

In verse 8 John continues and encourages the Christians to hold on to the prize of heaven and not waste his time by walking away from their faith.

## **2. A Christian's faith is a combined effort.**

He says, "Do not lose the prize for which WE have been working so hard." Our faith today is the result of numerous efforts. Someone led you the Christ. Someone taught you what Jesus did on your behalf. And someone is teaching you how to continue to walk in God. It can be through church, through books, through music, or through various other avenues. Your faith today is the result of numerous combined efforts let alone the power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Galatians 4:9-11**:

*And now that you have found God (or should I say, now that God has found you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual powers of this world? You are trying to find favor with God by what you do or don't do on certain days or months or seasons or years. I fear for you. I am afraid that all my hard work for you was worth nothing.*

When we fall we are not only letting God and ourselves down, but we are letting down those who have invested their time into us. Paul also said to the church in Philippi in **Philippians 2:15-16**:

*You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them. Hold tightly to the word of life, so that when Christ returns, I will be proud that I did not lose the race and that my work was not useless.*

I have a strong word for some this morning. If you are not serious about finding God, or serious about learning more about God, or willing to let God come and grow you up in him, or willing to let God be the ruler over your life, then you are in the wrong place. Our goal is help people find God and learn to love him with their very lives. With every

part of their lives. Please don't waste the efforts of those who are investing in you. Please don't suck up all of their time only to turn away from God. Please don't let them pour out their lives to you only to see you live no different than the rest of the world.

But I must balance out this strong word with a word of commitment. If you are someone who is really trying to find God - his will, his purpose - and you are seeking to see him change your life, then I can truly say that there are those who will invest in you and who want to support you and commit to your spiritual growth.

Jesus could have very well come to earth and reached out to the Pharisees, the religious people of the day, but he knew it was a waste of his time. Instead, he gave his time to those who were looking, those who had questions, and those who were willing to commit to him. Being a Christian is a combined effort of God and His Holy Spirit and the church.

John continues on in II John 8 and tells us to be diligent so that we will receive our full reward.

### **3. Be Diligent**

Diligent means to be steady, earnest and energetic in our application or effort. That we would live in such a way that we will receive our full reward. The Apostle Paul, when using the analogy of running a race said in **II Corinthians 9:24**:

*Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win.*

We can all run a race, but only few run to win. I remember watching Lynn's Mom run the LA Marathon. It was very clear that there were people running for different reasons. Not everyone ran to win, but some ran simply to say that they accomplished something in their lives.

I think the same can be said about our lives. Sometimes we run simply to say that we ran. At times our running doesn't require our best and we simply go through the motions of running. But as Christians we are committed to doing the best we can. To run with steady and energetic effort. To run like we will win. The Apostle Paul said in **Colossians 2:6-8**:

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him. Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ.*

Diligence means that we don't simply embrace something because it sound good or lines up with something we like to have. But diligence means that we remain persistent and consistently striving towards obedience to God.

Finally, in II John 9 John warns us not to wander beyond the teaching of Christ.

#### **4. Do Not Wander Away**

Many people have wandered away from Jesus by simply embracing one false teaching of some sort. We live in a society today that tries to explain every circumstance and situation. We have relied more on human intellect and emotions than on reality and truth. People have wandered away from Scripture and have embraced ideas that claim greater superior knowledge.

Let me tell you a vital rule live by this morning. If a teaching or idea cannot be backed up by scripture then it deserves no place in our lives. Everything that we do must have some type of principle that is backed up by God's word. But there is also the trap of making God's word say something it never intended to say. My words to this is don't take someone's word for it, find out for yourself. Read their scripture references in their context. Paul told Timothy in **I Timothy 1:3**:

*When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those who are teaching wrong doctrine. Don't let people waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual pedigrees. For these things only cause arguments; they don't help people live a life of faith in God. The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith.*

Ideas and teachings not found in scripture have crept their way into churches all across America and they have done nothing but bring speculation and confusion and arguments. God's word does not contradict itself and it does not bring confusion. God's word allows us to be filled with love from a pure heart, to have a clear conscience and develop a sincere faith. We, as Christians, need to be satisfied with what the Scriptures gives us.

#### **Conclusion**

So, this morning John is telling us to beware of those who will come and discredit the work of Jesus Christ, making him simply a fairytale of a concept of a good man. They will simply be speaking good words that people want to hear in order to gain a following. We are not to simply embrace an idea because it goes with what we want to believe. We need to embrace the entire truth or non at all.

John also tells us this morning that a Christian's faith is a combined effort. That as God and the Holy Spirit use people to help us grow in our faith, we need to respect people's time and effort. May we live in such a way that people can see that their effort was worth

it. God will not acknowledge you unless you acknowledge him. He wants us to be effective. He wants us to invest in those who show a hunger or who have questions about God.

Third, John calls us to remain diligent in our faith - to keep up a steady and full effort in our walk with God, to run in such a way that we will win, to constantly be striving towards God and nothing else. That we would not wander away on some bunny trail. That we wouldn't look for teachings beyond the scriptures for answers. But to take God at his word and to be satisfied with it.

May our faith remain constantly in motion towards God.