

Briefing Document: Spiritual Growth and Understanding God's Glory - 1

John Lesson 31

08/13/2025

I. Core Theme: God's Glory as the Foundation of Salvation and Sanctification

The central and most emphasized theme is that God's glory, rather than human merit, is the sole reason for salvation and forgiveness. This concept underpins the entire discussion of spiritual growth.

- Forgiveness for God's Glory: Salvation and the forgiveness of sins are not earned or deserved by individuals. Instead, they are a testament to God's grace and serve to "put upon display God's glory." The speaker repeatedly states: "You and I are forgiven not because we merit it. We are forgiven not because we earn it. We are forgiven not because there's something in us worth forgiving. We are forgiven because it gives testimony to the grace of God to do that."
- "For His Name's Sake": This phrase is interpreted as encompassing "all that God is." When God acts "for my name's sake," it signifies that His actions, including deferring anger and restraining punishment, are for His praise and to manifest His glory. This is illustrated with Old Testament references such as Psalm 79:8-9 ("Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name's sake") and Isaiah 48:9 ("For My name's sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off").
- Sanctification and Spiritual Maturity: Spiritual growth is directly linked to sanctification, which is presented as synonymous with spiritual maturity. The forgiveness of sins is the starting point, enabling believers to display God's grace.

II. Three Categories of Spiritual Growth (1 John 2:12-14)

The source delineates three distinct categories of spiritual growth, drawing from 1 John 2:12-14. It clarifies that simply being a Christian does not equate to a high level of spiritual maturity.

- A. "Little Children" (Spiritual Babies):
 - Defining Characteristic: Known the Father and delighted in their new spiritual life and dependence on God. They primarily experience an emotional, affectionate relationship with God, viewing Him as "Daddy" (Abba Father - Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6).
 - Focus: Relationship and affection, not information or theology. "Spiritual babies are attached to relationship more than they are to doctrine."
 - Vulnerabilities/Problems:

- Lack of Discernment: Easily deceived, beguiled, and led astray by "every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). They are prone to believing what people tell them without critical evaluation.
- Attachment to "Spiritual Heroes": Tend to attach themselves to individuals rather than theological truth (e.g., "I am of Paul," and another says, "I am of Apollos" - 1 Corinthians 3).
- Prey for Cults and False Teachers: Their lack of discernment makes them highly susceptible to manipulation by false teachers and cults.
- Important Clarification: Being a spiritual baby does not mean one is unconverted. Immaturity is not equal to being unconverted.
- B. "Young Men":
 - Defining Characteristic: Overcome the wicked one through strength derived from the word of God abiding in them. This category marks a shift from emotional attachment to knowledge and doctrine.
 - Focus: Acquiring spiritual knowledge, understanding doctrine, and being well established in their area of doctrine.
 - Overcoming the Wicked One: Not about physical confrontation with Satan but resisting his primary method of operation—false religious systems and false ideologies.
 - Resistance to False Doctrine: Spiritual young men are not easily deceived by cults or false teachings. They tend to be protective of truth and are strong in the Word.
 - Discernment: They are doctrinally sound and cannot be swayed by arguments against core Christian beliefs (e.g., Jesus' divinity, the Trinity, biblical inerrancy).
- C. "Fathers": Mentioned as the highest level of spiritual growth and slated for discussion in the subsequent lesson, likely defined as "known Him who is from the beginning."

III. Ancillary Announcements and Community Updates

- Community Events:
 - August memory verse: Psalm 99:5 ("Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool—He is holy.")
 - Breakfast dishes on the 17th: Protein focus (e.g., pork chops, rib roast, filet mignon, bacon).
 - Elders meet Monday at 6.
 - New Life Women's Fellowship on the 23rd (sign-up required).
 - September/October newsletter approaching (call for submissions).
- Prayer Requests & Praises:
 - Praise for Pamela's brother, Vin: Signed a lease for another year at reduced rent—one of three needs met (job and van still pending).

- Prayer for Vanessa: Valinda's niece in Arkansas experiencing multiple seizures daily; needs neurologist care.
- Prayer for Tony and Judy: Driving to Colorado Saturday.
- Praise for Katie Maakestad's granddaughter, Dalia: Home from Children's Hospital in Philadelphia after a long stay; parents navigating home care; has a G-tube.
- Continued prayers for Joyce.
- Humorous Anecdotes from Pastor Steve:
 - Finger injury: Attributed to being attacked by a loaf of sourdough bread with a knife attached.
 - Golf score: First nine holes: 47; then mind over matter took over and scored 40.

IV. Key Takeaways and Implications

- Emphasis on God's Sovereignty: All salvation and forgiveness are for His name's sake, underscoring God's ultimate sovereignty.
- Importance of Discerning Spiritual Maturity: The three categories provide a framework for assessing personal spiritual standing and fostering growth.
- Crucial Role of God's Word: Knowledge of and strength in the Word are paramount for resisting spiritual deception.
- Warnings Against Spiritual Vulnerability: Spiritual babies face dangers such as cults and false teachers, emphasizing the need for doctrinal teaching.

Greek Words Used

Abba (Ἀββᾶ) – Pronounced: AH-bah. Meaning: An intimate term for "father," expressing a close, personal relationship. Found in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.