

“CHILDREN, FATHERS, AND YOUNG MEN”

I JOHN 2:12-14

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INTRODUCTION

How do these verses fit into the structure of I John? They seem to be an interruption—and in a sense they are. John has been giving tests to prove the reality of one’s relationship with Christ—to have genuine fellowship with Him. His last was pretty hard-hitting—vv. 9-11. Does John think this to be true of his readers? Do they “hate” the brother? The next passage speaks of not loving the world. Thus we have:

- 1) You must love your brother (1:9-11)
- 2) You must not love the world (15-17)

With these words John assures them that they are indeed better than those pictured in vv. 9 & 11, and they are not the kind who love the world instead of God and the brothers. **But, they do need to be reminded and challenged.** Therefore, John looks at the entire group of believers and tells them that he writes to them **because** (used 6 times here) certain realities are true of them in their relationship with God.

John writes to them under three heading—and in two groups: Children, Fathers, and Young men.

KNOW WHO YOU ARE—AND LIVE LIKE IT!

But, why the 3 forms of “I am writing” and the 3 forms “I have written”?

Explanation of the 3 groupings:

- 1) The 3 designations refer to 3 different age levels or 3 different spiritual levels, or both.
- 2) All 3 groups refers to the entire congregations under different headings.
- 3) Children refer to all of them as throughout the epistle; John then divides them into “fathers” and “young men.” There are two different words for “children”—v. 12, v. 13c—basically same meaning. First emphasizes “birth” and family membership, second emphasizes submission under authority. Both show affection.

The use of the perfect tenses in this passage—6 times: for being forgiven (1), having known the Father/Christ (3), having overcome the Evil One (2).

I. THE POSITION OF THE LITTLE CHILDREN

A. Your Sins are forgiven (12).

1. Your sins have been and remain forgiven.
2. You are forgiven “for His name’s sake.

B. You Know the Father (13c)

1. You have come to know Him and continue to know Him.
2. It is as Father that you know Him.
3. It is through Christ that one knows the Father (Mt. 11:27)

II. THE POSITION OF THE FATHERS

A. You know Christ (13a)

1. The Person is the Son, as seen in 1:1-3 and John 1:1-4.
2. “From the beginning” here refers to the absolute beginning—same passages.
3. You have come to know Him and continue to know Him.
4. This knowledge speaks of a deeper understanding and relationship as one matures—more than “knowing the Father”; knowing the Son as the Father has manifested Him for his redemptive work.

B. You know Christ (14a)

1. Repetition of same truth.
2. There is no higher mark of spiritual maturity that knowing Him deeply.

This three-fold emphasis upon certain and lasting knowledge attained by all believers is not only a comfort and assurance to Christians, but is an attack on the false teachers who held that only a select few could attain to such knowledge—only those who follow their teachings and therefore would be willing to forsake the fellowship and teaching of John and the New Testament tradition through the apostles. The “knowledge” emphasized by those influenced by Gnostic teachings was theoretical, self-knowledge. Man needed to know his own origin, his current condition of imprisonment in the flesh, and his destiny; in this way he could “be saved. NT knowledge is knowing Christ personally—and thus having eternal life (Jn. 17:3). Such knowledge is experiential.

III. THE POSITION OF THE YOUNG MEN

A. You have overcome the Evil One (v. 13b; 14b)

1. You have overcome him at salvation and continue to stand in victory. (See also 4:4; 5:4, 5; Jn. 16:33—Jesus has overcome, thus also we do; “the overcomer” of Rev. 2 & 3)
2. “The Evil One” clearly refers to the Devil, Satan.
John uses this title “the evil one” for Satan also in 3:12; 5:18, 19; Jn. 17:15; also see Mt. 13:19; and Eph. 6:16. Other titles for “the evil” one used by John are:
 - a. “The Devil” (3:8, 10; Jn. 8:44; 13:2).
 - b. “Satan” (Jn. 13:27).
 - c. “The Ruler of this world/the world Ruler” (Jn. 12:31; 16:11; 14:30).
 - d. “The Accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10).
 - e. “The serpent of old who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).
 - f. “The Dragon” (Rev. 12:7-9; 13:2; 16:13; 20:2).

B. You are strong—in the Lord; explains how they overcome Satan.

C. The Word of God remains in you.

1. This is the message of salvation in Christ.
2. Through the Spirit the word takes up its dwelling in the believer and remains there.
3. The present tense shows its continuing activity.
4. The Word of God gives strength to the “young men” so as to maintain victory over the Evil One.

CONCLUSION

As a Christian, do you consider yourself weak, defeated, inconsistent, fairly worthless to the kingdom?

Think again! This is not the portrait John paints of the **average Christian life!**

- 1) Your sins are forgiven and your position before God is settled.
- 2) You have a personal relationship with God as Father.
- 3) As a young growing believer, you have overcome Satan in your salvation and stand victorious day by day.
- 4) You are “strong” in the Lord—claim that strength and grow in it!
- 5) God’s word through which you have been saved remains in you; grow in your relationship to the word and let it have more power over your daily life!
- 6) As you mature in Him you will gain a deeper knowledge of Him who is from the beginning.

Are you living each day in light of “**the normal Christian life**”?

KNOW WHO YOU ARE—AND LIVE LIKE IT!