

Announcements: (week 2 from the new location...)

- Facility updates - still working on things (**AC cray cray!** Viewing windows, tech stuff, etc...)
- Youth camp - deadline is one week - I can **personally attest**. If you need help, let us know.
- Dominican Republic Trip - luncheon next Sunday after 3rd... - please **register ahead** of time
- Wilco Women's - Baby Bottle Drive - Mothers to Fathers Day - **50% of annual revenue**
- Happy Mother's Day - thankful for many (**blessing**), praying for others (**hurting**) - **PRAY**

Please open to **1 John Chapter 2** (Need a Bible? ...)

- Last time: **Proof is in the pudding!** Two tests: **obedience & love (know that we know)**
- Next week: a cry **not to love the world or the things in it... (exhortation!)**
- This week: **A poetic, heartfelt insert** - parental **encouragement (a pause to reassure!)**
- On this mother's day, it's fitting to open to a passage that speaks of **Spiritual family...**

Message Title: "Family Matters!"

- **God's Children** (verse 12)
- **Babes in Christ** (verse 13/14)
- **Ready for Meat** (verses 13, 14)
- **Settled in Faith** (verses 13, 14)

We all get the **concept of family** (whether you come from a **broken or beautiful** one...)

- *Weird, crazy, grumpy, button pushers, worriers, etc...*
- **Every stage has a purpose**
- *Changing diapers... handing over car keys... asking them for tech help...*
- **The same is true in the church** - and we care about every stage!
 - (**vision** - **healthy = all 3!!!** (location caveat?))

Read verses 12-14

- **PRAY**

Couple items to point out:

- Clearly **writing** to **all believers**. Though *fathers and young men* - *females surely included*.
- **Do the verb tenses matter?** - "**I am writing vs have written**" Poetic? Gospel? This letter?
- **How many stages?** **One, two, three.** Scholars vary... (*I think three!*)
 - *A clear progression (pilgrims progress style!)* - **not literal age, but spiritual (both?)**
- **Does the order matter?** *It's possible it does, but may not*, I am going to **teach in groups...**

God's Children (verse 12)

John is much older... (nearly 100 yrs old? ...a far younger generation...)

V. 12 - Little children

- **Two different Greek words** for children in these verses.. (*a distinction being made*)
- **Little Children (teknion)** - "*little born ones; often addressed by teachers to their disciples...*"
- Deep affection for **every believer in Christ**. (*seven times in 1 John*) The **born again** ones!
- We're all **sons and daughters (mission!)** of the same. (*no matter what others say, THIS!*)

V. 12 - Because **your sins are forgiven** you

- **Your sins** - how many of you have sinned? **Say you have not? A liar!**
- **Sins (hamartia)** - "missing the mark, wandering from the righteous path, violating God's law"
- The **foundation of this beautiful family** is: **Forgiveness! (before strength... or service...)**
- **It begins (not with achievement) but with a receiving of grace!** Not "try harder," but...
- **Forgiven (aphiemi)** - "to forgive a debt, to release, to abandon, to send away" (Heb: "nasa")
 - **Day of Atonement** language... (**Leviticus 16**) = **scapegoat! (but year after year...)**
- **Hebrew 10:4,10, ESV** - "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins... [but] ...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.**"
- Not "**will be forgiven**", but "**are forgiven**" (**a settled reality!**). A **past moment w/ ongoing work.**
 - You are **not forgiven in degrees**, some more than others... **wrong!! All = fully this!**
 - **Finished! Propitiation/advocate!** And **the resurrection is proof of payment!**
- **Heb 8:12, NIV** - "For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**" (directly quoted from Jer. 31:34) - **hallelujah!**
 - **Psalm 103 = east to west! | Micah 7:19 = into depths of the abyss!**
 - **Preach it to yourself!** Some of you are still carrying weight/guilt from 20 years ago?

Moms, you've **forgiven your kids a thousand times** for *messes, markers, madness*, **How much more!?**

- Are any of you thankful God **did that for you?** Even more, **He did it for Himself!**

V. 12 - For **His name's sake.**

- **That's the basis.** Not because we had *earned or deserved* it, but because **He is merciful!**
- This is the **same God of the Old Testament**... **Blessing Israel** for **His Name's sake!**
- **Psalm 23:1-3, ESV** - "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores [refreshes] my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness **for His name's sake.**"
- Someone's **name meant a lot** back then... **Theologically: character, reputation and glory!**
- **Two verses blended...**
- **Phil. 2:9 + Acts 4:12** - "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him **the name which is above every name... nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" - **is there any name greater?!**

That's how Christianity begins: simple, blessed, basic truth...

- With **calling upon the name of Jesus** and **receiving His forgiving grace!**

You never graduate from being a child of God - remember that! This, first!

- Sure, you **mature in sanctification (that's coming next)**, but you **remain in identity!**
- But let's look now at **three stages of Christian growth**... **It's more than forgiveness!**

Every believer is fully forgiven, but **not every believer is in the same stage** of growth and maturity

- Let the **Holy Spirit** ask you **which of the three stages you're in...**

Babes in Christ (verse 13/14)

Some place end of v. 13, others beginning of v. 14 (NIV, CSB, NLT)

Still family language. *Still children...* but **not the same word** used (*much less common for John*)

V. 13/14 - **Little children** - The **spiritually young ones!** (*wee lil sprouts! Tender shoots!*)

- **Little Children (paidion)** - "a young, but growing child in need of training..." (under discipline)
- The **blissful ignorance of childhood!** *Unaware of all you will be someday, but learning...*
- **Not** just children **in age, but in faith.** You may be *80 yrs old and came to Christ last year...*
- **We all start as babies in the faith.** *Some of you are just older babies than others :)*

Remember, the **first lesson we all learn** is *forgiveness in Christ's name*

- ...but then, it's that **we now belong to a new family...**

V. 13/14 - **Because you have known the Father.**

- It's **not big theology first**, it's a **relationship!** **Know** = *not mere intellect, but by experience!*
 - ...You may not be able to explain **the hypostatic union...**
 - ...You might even think **Sodom and Gomorrah** are a married couple, **(smile!)**
 - ...who knows!?
- But **one of the first things you begin to grasp...** You have *a father in heaven, and a new family!*
- **If you're new in the faith - be of good cheer!** You may have **more Q's than A's, but belong...**
- **Two ways/roads... two fathers...**
- **John 8:42-44, NLT** - "Jesus told them, **'If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me... [but] you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does...'**"
- The church is **not a club, but a household.** and one of the first things we love is **God Himself!**
- **"And do you not glory in him? Little children when they begin to talk, and go to school, how proud they are of their father! Their father is the greatest man that ever lived: there never was the like of him. You may talk to them of great statesmen, or great warriors, or great princes, but these are all nobodies: their father fills the whole horizon of their being. Well, so it certainly is with us and our Father God."** (Charles Spurgeon, #1711: "A Sermon to the Lord's Little Children")
- **God spoke of the day when we would know Him better (in the new covenant to come)**
- **Jer. 31:34, AMP** - "...each man will no longer teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for **they will all know Me** [through personal experience], from the least of them to the greatest,' says the Lord."
- Then **Jesus explains not religious rituals**, but to **look to our Father. (mind-blowing!)**
- **Matthew 6:7-9, NIV** - "When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: **'Our Father in heaven...'**"
- **This is a deeply personal thing! A toddler doesn't understand a household budget, but knows how to run to "daddy" when scared...**
- **Romans 8:15-16, NLT** - "...you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, **'Abba, Father.'** For His Spirit joins [bears witness] with our spirit **to affirm that we are God's children.**"

Mom's on this mother's day - ever wonder if those **bedtime prayers, devos, or Sunday school**

lessons are doing anything? **Be encouraged today** (and **thank your mom** if she did this for you...)

2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15 - "I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also... **but you must continue in the things which**

you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” - Praise! Stories of dementia, don't remember kids, but verses/songs!

The point for the paidons, you belong to a family! Yet living like God is a probation officer...?

- **Two areas the enemy attacks: forgiveness and belonging.**
- **This is where faith begins. Accepting forgiveness and learning to know God...**

Once that foundation is set, there is still more growing to do... **Spiritual teenage years ahead!**

- Church, give grace to those young in faith. They make messes. Throw tantrums, and cuss.
- But give them some time (space and grace!) learning and growing in the Word:
- 1 Peter 2:2, CSB - “Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation...”

Don't despise the days of small beginnings! Parents, siblings, cheer on those first steps...

- **For the goal is not to stay as a child...**

Ready for Meat (verses 13, 14)

There comes a day when babies grow teeth. And learn to take bites into real food! (gnawing!)

- 1 Cor. 3:2, ESV - “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready...” (carnal living)
- Hebrews 5:13-14, NLT - “For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.”

You see the pattern repeated don't you? A baby Christian rightfully grows into a teenage one...

Vv. 13, 14 - **Young men** (fruit bearing ages!)

- Young Men (neaniskos) - “youth, or a young servant” (not to exclude females)
- The strength of one's prime. This is who we expect to engage in real Christian battles!
- “The proper attribute of youth is, to carry on the active parts of life – if soldiers, to be engaged in all active service.” (Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury 1857-1871)

These are the believers in the fight. They've taken some hits, and scraped some knees...

- Busily involved in the battle of Christian living (not like little babies or frail elderly)
- **Are you in your prime? Get in the fight, man!** - what are you waiting for...? (stay a baby?)
- Serve, engage, evangelize, don't just watch the older folks who've been at it, join them!
 - Martin Luther, John Bunyan, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, George Muller, William Carey, Jim Elliot, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael...

A church with only fathers...? Only babies...? The modern church needs you to step up!

V. 14 - Because **you are strong**

- **Great encouragement here!** You are, Christian. Not by might but by My Spirit says the Lord!

- *James 1:2-4, NIV* - "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work **so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**"
- The **active young men and women of the faith** are **learning to grow their spiritual muscles!**
- **Growth** doesn't come with **comfortable Christianity**, it comes from **contested Christianity.**

Are you in a hard season right now? God may be **doing more than you know...** **building a warrior!**

The **secret sauce**...?

V. 14 - And **the word of God abides** in you

- Not **wooden, mechanical study** (*though has its benefits*) but **living internalization!**
- *Deut 6:4-8* - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today **are to be in your hearts.** Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates..." (**air we breathe** and **rhythm we walk...**)
- **The Word** becomes **a way of life** and then **it directs your path...**
- *Psalm 119:11* - "**Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.**"
- **We lay hold of the Word** and then **it lays hold of us** and **becomes part of us!**
- "[Charles Spurgeon once said of John Bunyan] ...prick him anywhere, and you will find that **his blood is Bibline; the very essence of the Bible flows from him.** He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God..."

This is necessary, because our faith is not passive...

Vv. 13, 14 - And **you have overcome the wicked one**

- **(twice!)**
- **There is a real enemy...** (*definite article = "The" evil one...*) - **antichrist** coming up next...?
- *1 Peter 5:8-9, NLT* - "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and **be strong in your faith.**" (and seek God's help!)
- *Matthew 6:13, NIV* - "...and lead us not into temptation, but **deliver us from the evil one.**"

Victory is not absence of battle, it's being **an overcomer in the midst of battle!**

- **You HAVE overcome** - you **fight FROM victory, not FOR it!**
 - **Disarmed... at Calvary! (assured standing!)**

Victory in and through the Word!

- (**highlighted** at the **VERY END** of v. 14! = **last for a reason!**)
- **The key to growth and maturity!** (*this is where the fight is, the devil fights this matter!*)
- *Eph. 6:16-17* - "...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**" - **On repeat.** *Joshua 1, Psalm 1, etc...* (*Matthew 4* - "it is written")

There's **no shortcuts to this type of growth**, friends...

- This kind of growth takes **tears and time...** **but you are strong.**

Settled in Faith (verses 13, 14)

Well finally John addresses the **Spiritually mature** people in the church.

- The **mighty oaks** with deep roots...
- **Are you one of these? Find a young warrior and pour into** them...
- **Young warriors in the room? Find a mighty oak and sit under their shade...**
- This can be **intentional** or just **rubbing shoulders** in **studies and serving... (share vision)**
- **"The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are: that good fortune I have enjoyed for nearly twenty years." (C.S. Lewis, 1942, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?") - some of you had parents to give you this blessing...**

Vv. 13, 14 - **Fathers (seasoned saints - all the above already assumed! (doesn't need to be said))**

- **Fathers (pater)** - "advanced in years, eldest ancestor(s), title of honor/authority, God Himself"
- **1 Tim 5:1, NASB** - "Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather **appeal to him as a father**"
- The experience of **maturity deserves honor & respect**. They've **walked more road than you...**

Vv. 13, 14 - **Because you have known Him who is from the beginning**

- **(twice!)** (they spent a long time **with the eternal one...**)
- This language is **rich with depth**. (**Are you growing deeper or just busier?**)
 - It's possible to have **been a Christian for decades**, but are **spiritually stunted in faith...**
- **Not these big ole trusty trees** - they've watched life change... **But God has not!**
 - **No longer driven by fads/trends... fear of man... or even emotional swings...**
 - **The young believer wants answers, the mature believer wants Jesus...**

Old country preacher at the end of His ministry: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so..." **Something deeper?** "Son, **that is deeper**, I just used to think it was shallow.."

- Though **even the mighty oaks have not yet fully arrived** and **still cry out...**
- **Hosea 6:3. NLT** - "Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring."

Closing:

A Beautiful family of God's people!

- **forgiven people, belonging people, battling people, and finally, grounded people.**
- **Be encouraged and Press on!**

Response of sorts? Adoption? Growth? (have each group stand? reverse all standing?)

PRAY - Mother's Day Benediction: Pray over mothers, spiritual parents, and every generation.