

This morning, I am going to say, turn to 1 John for the last time this year. Christmas is upon us, New Years is upon us, Vision Sunday is upon us. We will get back into 1 John January 14, 2018, but one more time in 2017, let's turn to 1 John 2

I hope we have been hit with some pretty thought provoking truths so far in our study of this letter. It is almost as though John realizes this and allows us to take a breath in these next few verses as He address 3 distinct segments of the congregation.

1 John 2:12-14

We see a clear progression of maturity here in these few verses.

1. Little children are identified in verse 12 and the latter part of verse 13
2. Young men are identified in the middle of verse 13 and the end of verse 14
3. Fathers are identified in verse 13 and 14

The natural progression of spiritual maturity is from little children, to young men, to fathers.

1. Please note that this has nothing to do with age...though, in most cases, it should.
2. It has little to do with how long you have been a Christian...though it should.
3. It has little to do with how long you have gone to church...though it should.
4. Maturity is not based on these thing. **Maturity is based on obedience.**
5. Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
 - a. Teach them to obey...to observe.
 - b. Not just to teach them! That is what we do. We teach and teach and teach and teach!
 - c. But to teach them to obey and observe.
 - d. Someone who knows 90% of the information while only observing 10% of what they know is LESS mature than someone who knows only 10% of the information while observing 90% of what they know.
 - e. Observation is the litmus test to maturity. **Maturity is based on obedience.**

So, we have 3 tiers of maturity given to us by John.

I. Little Children v12, 13c

1. Their sins are forgiven for His sake.
 - a. They are so little...so helpless...so insignificant, there was nothing in them that merited this forgiveness
 - b. They were forgiven for His sake
 - c. This is grace...no merit...a gift.
2. They know the Father
 - a. They may not know anything else, but they know Him as Father.
 - b. They may not grasp most of his incommunicable or communicable attributes, but they grasp the simple truth that he is a good good father to them

3. Matthew 18:3 *Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

- a. You don't get in as a young man or a father, but as a little child...and that has nothing to do with age!
- b. Isn't this good news!
 1. It doesn't take a huge faith and repentance and knowledge to come to Jesus.
 2. Just a small faith, a small repentance is all that is necessary to come to Jesus.

II. Young Men v13b, 14b

These young men are characterized by 3 things.

1. They are Strong

- a. 1 Corinthians 16:13 *Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*
- b. This word, "be strong" denotes inner, spiritual growth.
- c. The verb is in the passive voice, and literally means "be strengthened."
- d. How are we strengthened? How are we made strong

2. The Word Abides in Them

- a. We are strengthened by the word!
 1. Get the Word in you. I want to get the word in you...I want to give you no excuse!
 2. You have to hear, listen, read, study, dig and do it consistently.
 3. We don't usually grow through big events, but in the mundane every day spiritual disciplines.
 4. Day in day out reading, hearing, and obeying.
- b. Go to the Scriptures with the help of the Spirit with a willingness to Submit and Stay in it until you hear from God.

3. They Overcome the Evil one

- a. Ephesians 6:10-17
- b. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but with spiritual forces...but with Satan and His army of special forces.
 1. They have much experience inspecting and dissecting hearts.
 2. They have a stunning ability to lead us down into the depths of sin by winding stairs that keep us from seeing the bottom of where we are going.
 3. We must stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
 - a. Stand Firm v11
 - b. Resist v13a
 - c. Stand Firm v13b
 - d. Stand Firm v14a
 4. 1 Corinthians 16:13 *Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be*

strong.

c. Put on the FULL armor of God.

1. Don't miss a piece!
 - a. It is the whole armor of God.
 - b. Satan is an archer that can split an arrow!
 - c. You cannot leave even a small gap!
2. Make sure it is the armor of God...not your own idea of what is effective
3. Only standard issue will do.
 1. Belt of Truth
 2. Breastplate of Righteousness
 3. Shoes of the gospel of peace
 4. Shield of faith
 5. Helmet of salvation
 6. Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

d. **We must not confide in the armor of God, but in the God of the armor!**

e. Ultimately it all points to Christ!

1. Belt of Truth: John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the **truth**, and the life.*

2. Breastplate of Righteousness: 1 Cor 1:30 *you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, **righteousness** and sanctification and redemption,*

3. Shoes of the gospel of Peace: Eph 2:14 *For he himself is our **peace**, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*

4. Shield of Faith: Hebrews 12:2 *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our **faith**,*

5. Helmet Salvation: Psalm 62:2 *He alone is my rock and my **salvation**, my fortress;*

6. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: John 1:1, 14 *In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

7. Put on the armor. Put on Christ!

Romans 13:12-14 *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

A few questions...

1. Are you strong? If not, why not? What is it that is keeping you from being strong in the Lord?
2. Is God's Word abiding in you? If not, why not? What is keeping that from being a reality in your life?
3. Are you seeing victory over the evil one? If not, why not? What is keeping you from being victorious?
4. Are you dressed for battle? Have you put on Christ? THE GOSPEL

III. Fathers

1. Know Him

- a. This doesn't sound like much, but this is huge.
- b. There is a knowing Him that comes from walking with Him through many dangers, toils, and snares.
- c. There is a knowing Him that comes from walking with Him through many victories, revivals, and times of silence and the mundane.
- d. There is a knowing Him that comes from wrestling with Him time and time again through many different seasons of life
- e. Genesis 32:24-32

2. In the midst of the conflict to be near unto God is blessed, and also apart from the conflict with the world, or sin, or Satan, when clouds gather over your head, when adversity, loss and grief inflict wound upon wound in your heart, when the fig tree does not blossom, and the vine will yield no fruit, then with Habakkuk to rejoice in God, because His blessed nearness is enjoyed more in sorrow than in gladness, this has been the lesson of history in all times. Abraham Kuyper

Conclusion:

The natural progression of spiritual maturity is from little children, to young men, to fathers.

1. It is not about age
2. It is not about how long you have been a Christian
3. It is not about how long you have gone to church
4. **Maturity is based on obedience.** We must mature!

No premium was given to dwarfs; no encouragement to an old babyhood. The babies were to grow; the old, instead of feebleness and infirmities, were to bear fruit in old age, and be fat and flourishing. The divinest thing in religion is holy men and holy women. E.M. Bounds

Discussion Questions

1. Take some time to review the sermon notes from Sunday.
2. Was there anything from this sermon that was difficult to understand or that didn't make sense to you? Discuss it with the group to try and get a better understanding.
3. What do we learn about God the Father....God the Son....and/or God the Holy Spirit from the main Scripture text that was used?
4. What do we learn about man from the main text?
5. Are there any commands to obey? Promises to believe? Sins to avoid in the main Scripture text?
6. What do you believe was the most impactful part of the sermon Sunday? Discuss.
7. How do you plan to apply some portion of what you learned to your life? For example, "In response to this sermon, I will _____"