

HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

1 John 2:12-14

There are some times when studying the Word of God that I run into a difficult passage for me to understand. It seems to challenge me more than others when it comes to understanding what is being conveyed. These three verses we will be looking at for this study is one of those passages.

In an effort to grasp what John is communicating I decided to group together those things he was saying to the three different groups of God's children which make up His family. Doing this helped me so, as I will use this idea as I try to convey to you what I think the message is saying to all of us and hope that in doing so it will prove to be helpful to you as it was with me.

First, allow me to say all of us can, and should, identify with one of these groups. You and I are responsible to know which group we belong to. But let's beware, as we decide which group we belong to and regardless of how difficult that may be, let's face the truth even if it hurts: and believe me, truth hurts! There are some of us who think we are mature when in reality we are not. Instead of belonging to the "fathers" group, as we may falsely think, we may actually belong to the "little children" group.

Remember what John was just teaching us two verses ago about someone who claimed to be walking in the light when they were, in reality, walking in darkness?

So, we should think carefully before we find ourselves embarrassingly boasting about belonging to a group we really don't belong to.

It seems to me all three of these groups are appropriate for us to identify with depending on where we are at in our Christian experience. For instance, it is normal to begin our journey as "little children." In fact, that is the only way we can begin. We begin when we have a new birth experience. That's when we are born into the family of God as "little children." The *only* two people I know who were mature and fully grown at birth were Adam and Eve.

Although we begin as "little children" we are not to stay that way. We are expected to mature or mature. We are, in essence, commanded to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." **2 Peter 3:18**

We are to work and strive to “come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (or mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ.” **Ephesians 4:12-15**

A quick illustration here may help before I move on. No one would expect to find apples on an apple tree in the dead of Winter. It takes Spring time to produce the buds, blossoms, leaves, and apples on an apple tree. Then, in Summer we can pick the fruit of the apple tree in order to satisfy our hunger. In the Fall, we expect to find the apple tree bear once again as it heads into the harsh days of Winter anxiously awaiting the arrival of those warm Spring days, once again.

All of the different seasons are important in order for the apple tree to perform as its Creator has designed it to perform. So it is with a believer in Christ. We are also designed to pass through different stages and levels of life. As “little children” we not expected to act as “young men” or as “fathers.” But, neither should “fathers” act like “little children.” I’m afraid that happens all too often.

As I mentioned just a few minutes ago, when I began this study I decided to group what was being said to the “little children,” the “young men,” and the “fathers” together. Again, doing so has helped me and I pray it helps you as well, that is, if you need help understanding this passage.

First let me say, we are all “little children.” We are the children of God regardless of our age. This year, my son (Todd) and daughter (Amanda) will turn forty five and forty three respectively. Yet to me, they are still my (little) children. I do not treat them as I did when they were at home under feet but, regardless of whatever their age may be as long as I am living they will be my (little) children.

I believe this applies to how our Heavenly Father thinks about us. Although we begin as a babe and become a mature man or woman, we are still His children.

That being said, it is apparent He sees us as we are and where we are, whether that be as “little children” or “young men” or “fathers.” And as He does, He has some important Fatherly thoughts about us He wants to express.

Before we consider these different groups, I want to highlight the fact that John, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, saw fit to make two rounds of comments on these different groups. In the case of the “fathers” he makes almost the exact statement twice. As to the purpose for this, I am completely in the dark. Although I am in the dark, the Lord knows the purpose and, maybe, one day so shall we.

“LITTLE CHILDREN”

Verse 12 begins, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.” Then in **verse 13** he adds another comment, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”

Let’s break this down. Here we find God saying when a person becomes one of His children:

- “because your sins are forgiven you.” Now I don’t know about you, by that puts me on shoutin’ ground! This applies to all of God’s children regardless of what group they belong to! Talk about good news! The most basic thing we can know as a child of God is that our sins are forgiven. Now that is a good place to start but we are commanded to progress beyond that or the danger is we will remain babes in Christ which would be more than unfortunate for us.
- please note the “little children...are forgiven...for his name’s sake.” In a family setting, babes are not expected to know much. But in God’s family even though they are just babes, they can know their sins are forgiven and that it was through their placing faith in the name of Jesus that made the difference between the guilt they knew and the grace they had been given. As they to grow, they will discover many wonderful things about the name of Jesus. Wonderful things such as: it’s a sovereign name (**Philippians 2:9-10**), it’s a saving name (**Matthew 1:21**); it’s a special name (**Acts 4:12**).
- Finally He says it’s “because ye have known the Father.” I suppose the best thing I can say here is God the Father expects His “little barins” or “little children” to grow into spiritual adulthood and become themselves mature. As His children do grow, they are to never forget who their Father is but, as they grow, they are expected to continually learn more about Him.

“YOUNG MEN”

Verse 13 “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” He continues in **verse 14** with “I have written unto you, young men, because

ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

I don't know about you but I find it interesting John made four distinct comments to the “young men.” It may be that the “young men” are more in the heat of the battle, so to speak, than the other two groups. That does not mean the other two groups know no battles. The enemy of man's soul always does his best to cause problems for the one who decides to trust Christ as Savior from the moment of their new birth to the last breathe they take in this world.

The comments John makes about the “young men” are as follows:

- “ye have overcome the wicked one” and that has been accomplished by means of a new birth, by the blood Jesus shed at Calvary (which was applied by faith to the life of the repenting sinner), and the book (which refers to the Word of God) they have taken into their hearts and lived out in their lives.
- “ye are strong” and here John is talking about being spiritually strong. Without a doubt this statement can only be true and understood as we consider the next statement he makes:
- in this statement we find the means to the strength the “young men” possess. It was that “the word of God abideth in you” and, I imagine, this fact is the reason for their strength and their ability to overcome the wicked one! We cannot be successful in our battle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil without possessing and having a sufficient amount of the Word of God hidden away in our hearts. We find in **Matthew 3:1-11** Jesus Himself used the Word of God in order to defeat the assaults of the Devil when he tempted our Savior in the wilderness. If the Word of God was sufficient and efficient enough for our Lord, so will it be for you and I. Let's all do what **Psalms 119:11** says the psalmist did as we hear him say: “Thy word have I hid in mind heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
- here we find John repeating the fact that the “young men” “have overcome the wicked one.” I believe anytime something is repeated in the Word of God it is done for at least two reasons: **1)** it is done for emphasis: meaning it is to done so to emphasis what is being presented; **2)** it is done in order to grab our attention. It's like the Holy Spirit is saying, “**Listen**, if I believe something is worthy of repeating, I expect you to pay attention!” In this statement we find it possible to overcome the wicked one. In fact, we will discover additional information on overcoming later in this letter of John's.

“FATHERS”

Verse 13 begins with “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is in you.” We find he says the same thing to them in the beginning of **verse 14** with very similar words used in **verse 13**. “I have written.” (this is interesting in light of the fact he just addressed them in the previous verse but he continues with) “because ye have known him that is from the beginning.”

As a babe in Christ, knowing God as Father or “Abba, Father” as we find in **Romans 8:14-15** is enough to know. But, as a babe in Christ grows, matures, and faces a variety of trials and temptations in their walk for Christ, this truth all but demands we get to know God, not only as “Abba, Father,” but in other ways as well.

In fact, getting to know Him more will enable the growing believer to “stand” (**Ephesians 6:14**) and “withstand in the evil day” (**Ephesians 6:13**), all those “fiery darts” the wicked one throws their way. It is in knowing God as *Jehovah, El Shaddai, Elohim, El Elyon, El Gibbor, El Olam, Adonai, Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Shammah, Jehovah Nissi*, or one of the many other names we find in the Old Testament and what those names mean (given as a revelation of God whereby we may know something of both the character and ability of God), that provides the added strength necessary for a growing believer.

As I come to the end of this study of **1 John 2:12-14** I rejoice in what the Lord has enabled me to see. I go away with a clearer picture of the message meant for me. I hope you feel the same as do I.

It is a great thing to be a new born child of God. Yet, in so many ways, it is greater to be a maturing or a mature follower of Christ as we experience the blessings and privileges that being in brings as we grow into the full likeness of Christ which is God’s ultimate goal for all of us.

Allow me to close with this thought. It is good to be a babe in Christ or belong to the “little children” group of Gods family. But, it’s not good to stay there for the entire span of your life lived for the Lord. God expects and demands all of us to grow.

So, by the grace of God and for His glory of God, let’s grow as God intends for us to and that we need to.

Tom Price, 2020