

Thanksgiving Assurances

1 John 2:12-14

INTRODUCTION

For this morning, I'd like to draw your attention to **1 John 2:12-14**. The apostle John draws our attention to blessings for which to be grateful...we could include them under the category of **Thanksgiving Assurances**.

Who is being addressed? Throughout his letter, John challenges the professing Christian, who is a talker but not a walker. He has been challenging the phony follower. But now, he shifts his attention, and says to the true believer (and him/her alone), *“Now I’m talking to you.”* Look at his language. Just look at how each sentence starts: *“I am writing to you, I am writing to you, I am writing to you.... I write to you, I write to you, I write to you.”*

John is now writing directly to the Christians, to those who walk their talk. And look at what he calls them. He gives them three names: *“little children”* and *“children,”* but also he calls them, *“fathers”* and *“young men.”* Now, as you can imagine, with such imaginative labeling, there is much debate over the identity of these three groups. All commentators agree that Christians are being addressed (after all, no one believes John wanted to exclude women), but they divide over whether John is speaking literally or metaphorically. In other words, is John here addressing different ages of people within the church, literally children, young men, and fathers? Or is he addressing different stages of spiritual maturity?

It is my view, that these three groups represent three different stages of spiritual maturity. The threefold grouping relates, not to “years reckoned by the calendar, but to spiritual maturity. John Stott summarizes it this way: *“The little children are those newborn in Christ. The young men are more developed Christians, strong and victorious in spiritual warfare; while the fathers possess the depth and stability of ripe Christian experience.”*

Commentators spend a great deal of time discussing these things but all they are really doing is sharing their theory. Yet, the question we need to answer is, *“What is it that John is*

trying to teach us?” I believe John is trying to encourage the church by reminding them of some of the things they know and can be sure of. In this passage, we find three important truths that will help us as followers of Christ. Notice that in each comment John says he is writing *“because you have”* or *“because you are”*. He is not writing **SO** they can attain these things. He is writing **BECAUSE** they have attained these things. He gives us **three assurances** for which we should be grateful for.

The first is...

I. We are _____ for His name’s sake (2:12)

The very first thing we need to know as believers is that (a fact, not a feeling) our sins are forgiven on account of His name. John does not say our sin **will be forgiven** but that they **have been forgiven**. Every one of our three assurances is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense in Greek corresponds to the perfect tense in English and describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated.

Please hear this. A true believer is not **longing** for forgiveness, **hoping** for forgiveness, or **uncertain** about forgiveness. We **have been** forgiven. In too many cases when you ask a believer if they know they have been forgiven or are going to Heaven, they say things like, *“I hope so”* or *“I’m doing the best I can”* or *“I am doing the best I can”* or *“I don’t know”*. This is not the Christian position! The Christian says, *“My sin has been forgiven!”* In the words of that beautiful hymn, It is Well With My Soul: *“My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”*

Secondly,

II. We have _____ the evil one (2:13b, 14b)

The apostle John writes to those who are young, whether chronologically or spiritually, *“because you have overcome the evil one.”* Since youth and strength are often linked together, the epistle's words about overcoming are appropriately directed to those who are young. **But here the imagery does not suggest physical strength so much as it does perseverance in the life of faith and commitment.** These words are reminiscent of **Isaiah 40:31**, that *“those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength...They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

Young men are doctrinally strong. How do you get strong? **By letting the Word of God abide in you.** A young man has outgrown his emotions and feelings and looks to the Word for guidance. Therefore, they've overcome the wicked one. In fact, he mentions overcoming the evil one twice. What a potent reminder to those at this stage of life.

John tells us that we **HAVE** overcome the evil one. There is no reason for us to walk around as if we were defeated. We are not! Regardless of the circumstances, we can *“do all things through Christ who strengthens us”*. (**Phil 4:13**) We are reminded of the words of Jesus who said, *“in the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, for I have overcome the world.”* (**John 16:33**) Later John will remind us, *“Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world.”* (**1 John 4:4**) Satan is no match for the power of God. He can resist and he can attack but he cannot defeat God's Spirit that resides in all who believe. There will be wounds, there will be setbacks (because of our unwillingness to trust God) but there will NOT be defeat.

There are two implications that come with this truth.

First, we need to stop making _____.

Second, we need to live in the _____ of the Lord.

Lastly.

III. We _____ God (2:13a, 14a)

The third assurance is that we know God (or the one who was from the beginning). Notice that John does not say that you know **ABOUT** God. John is not talking about information; He is talking about experience. **Spiritual babies delight in their experiences, and young men delight in their understanding, but fathers delight in God.** He may spend as much time in prayer as he does in study because he knows the Word and wants to commune with the One who is revealed in it.

As we get older in the faith we have a new perspective. The things that we used to get so worked up about don't seem all that important. We find a greater sense of contentment in life. We discover that things don't last and don't satisfy. **Relationships are what matter.** As we mature in our faith we come to realize that it is not how much we do for God but how well we know God that truly matters. It is not how fast you run but how well you listen and rest in God's presence.

As we near the end of our earthly journey our heart should become more and more fascinated with the prospect of seeing Him face to face. The things of this world should start to get dim because our focus is more and more on what is to come. Like Paul we can say, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Death loses its sting because we understand that death is not the end of life but the fulfillment of life. It is not the time when we cease to be, but the time when we become what we were made to be. To quote **C.S. Lewis**, we realize that all of life on earth *"was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."* [Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle]

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? What I have tried to show you is that as we stop to count our blessings too often our greatest treasures are forgotten or overlooked. Today, the apostle John has reminded us of three of our richest blessings:

- *We have been forgiven and granted eternal life due to the work of Christ*
- *We are sure of victory over the devil because of our position in Christ and we no longer have to give in to the sin of the past.*
- *We have come to know the true and living God and no longer have to be driven by the things of this world that will not last. Our appetite is for the eternal.*

These are great blessings. These are important assurances. These are truths liberate us from defeat and bondage; they give us confidence no matter what the circumstance.

Someone described the kind of needed focus on thanksgiving in this way:

**As we gather 'round our tables
On this next Thanksgiving Day,
Time would fail to count the blessings
That have followed all our way;**

**Grace sufficient, help and healing,
Prayer oft answered at our call;
And the best of all our blessings,
Christ Himself, our all in all.**

**While we love to "count the blessings,"
Grateful for the year that's gone,
Faith would sweep a wider vision,
Hope would gaze yet further on.**

**For the signals all around us
Seem with one accord to say,
"Christ is coming soon to bring us
Earth's last, best Thanksgiving Day!"**