

Module 6: 1 John 2:12-14

- 1) Read 1 John 2:3-17 for context.
 - a) What words do you see repeated often in the section starting in verse 12?
 - b) What titles do you suggest for the paragraphs starting in verse 12?

- 2) Today's focus is verses 12-14.
 - a) **Observations**
 - i) Transition
 - (1) No connecting word
 - (2) Apparent abrupt change in subject matter
 - ii) Similar Actions
 - (1) I am writing to you (3 times)
 - (2) I have written to you (3 times)
 - iii) Similar Audience
 - (1) Little children, **fathers, young men**
 - (2) Children, **fathers, young men**
 - iv) Similar Affirmations
 - (1) Because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake
 - (2) **Because you know Him who has been from the beginning**
 - (3) **Because you have overcome the evil one**
 - (4) Because you know the Father
 - (5) **Because you know Him who has been from the beginning**
 - (6) **Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one**
 - v) Different Actions
 - (1) I **am writing** to you (3 times, present tense)
 - (2) I **have written** to you (3 times, aorist tense)
 - vi) Different Audience
 - (1) **Little children**, fathers, young men – refers to the community or kinsmanship between a parent and child
 - (2) **Children**, fathers, young men – refers to the subordination of a child to a parent.
 - vii) Different Affirmations #1
 - (1) **Because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake** (little children)
 - (2) **Because you know the Father** (children)
 - viii) Different Affirmations #2
 - (1) Because you have overcome the evil one
 - (2) Because **you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and** you have overcome the evil one
 - ix) Order of Readers
 - (1) Why (1) little children or children, (2) fathers, (3) young men?
 - (2) Why not ascending order: (little) children, young men, fathers?
 - (3) Why not descending order: fathers, young men, (little) children?

x) What other observations do you have?

b) Possible Interpretations

i) Categories of Readers

- (1) Each of the three refers to all of John's readers, to the truly saved, for in every saved person there are the analogies to childhood, youth and fatherhood. (Barclay, Rosscup)
- (2) The words "little children" (*teknia*) and "children" (*paidia*) refer to all the saved as a whole (2:1), and "young men" and "fathers" then divide the readers into two divisions. Women are included in these metaphors. (Robertson, Hiebert)
- (3) The three categories denote three stages of spiritual growth: first, newborn babes; second, older believers who are like young men in their spiritual vigor; and third, those who have the most mature development. (Stott, Trench)

ii) Writings

- (1) Present tense refers to 1 John, aorist tense to 2 John or 3 John
- (2) Present tense refers to 1 John, aorist tense back to the Gospel of John (Ross)
- (3) Present tense are from John the writer's point of view, aorist from the readers' point of view
- (4) Present tense is because he is now writing, not having finished the whole epistle, while aorist refers back to the part of the letter already written. (Brooke)
- (5) Present tense as he is writing, but then suddenly realizes that he may die before his audience reads his words, so changes to the aorist tense so that his audience takes these words as his last to them. (Candlish)
- (6) Aorist tense is used as stylistic variation to avoid monotony. (Burdick)
- (7) John was interrupted after writing the first triad in the present tense. He then picked up his train of thought with the aorist tense. (Law)

c) Chosen Interpretation

- i) Transition – Verses 12-14 are a reassurance to the Christian readers that they are not like the supposed brother who does not love (9-11). This is similar to the reassurance John gives his "little children" in 2:1, where he teaches them about sin and their remedy for sin, in contrast to the erroneous claims of the false teachers. In the midst of exposing false thinking, John gives hope to his precious sheep.
- ii) Actions – Of the suggested interpretations above, only Ross', Brooke's, and Burdick's seem likely to me. I favor Brooke's, because this is the most natural reading to me. John reiterates his statements, tying them back to previous teachings in this epistle, and changing them slightly for emphasis.
- iii) Audience – Two categories of readers, "fathers" and "young men" make for a more natural understanding. This is consistent with the ordering of (little) children → fathers → young men, where (little) children first refers to all of John's saved readers. Also, both *teknia* and *paidia* are used this way elsewhere in the text, *teknia* in 2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21 (also John 13:33 for a total of 8 times in NT) and *paidia* in 2:18 (also in John 21:5, total of 49

times in NT), while “fathers” and “young men” do not ever refer to the whole Christian community in the NT (Brown). Repeating the words only for “fathers” and “young men” underscores that there are two, not three categories of believers. Using the two different words for (little) children demonstrates the growing relationship John has with his sheep. First, he has written to them as his subordinate (*paidia*) and now he is writing to them with a kinsman relationship, albeit still parent-child role (*teknia*) in mind.

- iv) Affirmations – Note the encouragement of total positive reassurance. There is no mention of anything remotely negative here.
 - (1) All believers,
 - (a) “Your sins have been forgiven you” – you have entered into a relationship with God by justification. Note it is for Christ’s name’s sake – for His glory.
 - (b) “You know the Father” – you have an on-going relationship with the Father in ever-increasing sanctification (see previous context).
 - (2) Fathers, because of your length of years in the faith, you have confidence in your faith, because you have known Christ from His days of ministry and when you were first saved. There is longevity and consistency in your relationship with Him. You are not easily swayed by the Gnostics and other false teachers.
 - (3) Young men, you have overcome the devil, because you defend your faith with the word of God.
- v) Putting it all together – My believing flock, I have written to you already and now write again that Christ has forgiven your sins, initiating your relationship with the Father which now continues. Mature believers, be reassured because of the longevity and consistency of your faith in Christ from the beginning of the new church age He ushered in. Your faith is real! Young men, be reassured that you have power within you (the HS using God’s word) that is stronger than the devil. Living this way produces good fruit, not like the false teachers who do not walk the talk. In contrast to them, live in obedience, walk as Christ did, and love your brothers.

d) Applications

- i) Our reassurance comes from what God does for us, not what we do for God. For example, God is light and reveals himself to us. Our sins have been forgiven. Jesus is our Advocate with the Father and the propitiation for our sins.
- ii) There will be difficult times for the young Christian where he will need to be strong and may need to overcome the evil one. No need to fret. Success is within sight, because this is standard practice for the one who obeys God and houses the word of God in his heart.
- iii) For the mature Christian, get reassurance by remembering God’s work in your life from your beginning as a Christian.
- iv) If you want to encourage someone, list for that person how God has blessed him/her, as John does in 2:1-2 and 12-14.
- v) What other application do you have?

- 3) Handout for next week
 - a) Praise the Holy Spirit for how He has allowed you to apply to your life a specific truth learned in the study so far.
 - b) Reread verses 3-17 for context.
 - c) Thank God for what you learned from verses 12-14.
 - d) Focus on verses 15-17.
 - e) What words are repeated several times?
 - f) What contrasts are being made in these verses?
 - g) How do these verses tie into the previous verses? Explain your thinking.
 - h) What do you think is the one main point of these verses? Make sure to base this interpretation on what you observe in the text. Remember, observation, then interpretation, then application.
 - i) Fill in the title for the paragraph beginning in verse 15 in the SURVEY CHART.