

Thursday, March 28, 2024 • Read 1John 2:12–14

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom is the apostle writing (v12a)? Why (v12b)? To whom else is he writing (v13a)? Why (v13b)? To whom else (v13c)? Why (v13d)? Whom does he address again in v13e? Why is he writing them (v13f)? And whom again in v14a? Why (again!) is he writing them (v14b)? And whom again in v14c? Why (v14d)? Strong to do what (v14e)?

**Who are the great ones on the earth?** 1John 2:12–14 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Christians are the great ones on the earth, whom we should love with a special love.**

How important our brethren must be, since the Lord places such an emphasis upon loving them! And this is exactly the point that the apostle now makes in vv12–14. Why is the apostle writing to little children? Why, then, fathers? And why youths? In each case, the answer that he gives belongs not to something in their earthly abilities or connections, but in their union with Christ and adoption by the Father. Those who belong to God are the “great ones” on the earth and the most worthy of the apostle’s attention—and yours.

**Little children.** Little children are often overlooked. But what a great thing a Christian child is! His sin is forgiven. He knows almighty God as “Father.” Dear Christian child, here are the A, B, Cs of the faith for you to hold to as the foundation for all other knowledge and strength: trust in Jesus’s Name for your forgiveness, and know that in Jesus, God is your heavenly Father. The tiniest child who has begun to do this is greater than the most intelligent, strong adult who is without forgiveness and adoption. How much, then, ought we to love and respect those brethren who are little children!

**Fathers.** Among those to whom this was originally written, those who were elderly might have been famous for whom they knew. When Polycarp was martyred in 155 at the age of 86, one of the things he was most famous for was having known the apostle who wrote this letter. But elderly Christians know someone even greater than an apostle of old. They know “Him Who is from the beginning”!

There are many old and interesting connections that an elderly unbeliever may have, making him worth spending some time listening to and caring for. But none of them have so great a connection as an elderly believer. Perhaps you, dear reader, are an elderly believer. Here is something of great value that you may contribute to the church: the witness and testimony of one who knows the Creator. How much we ought to respect and love those brethren who are “fathers” in the faith!

**Youths.** Ordinarily, one who is interested in strength and ability would give special attention to youths: just consider how much attention athletes receive in our culture. But there is a power that is greater than the physical strength, agility, and endurance of a youth: power to “overcome the wicked one” that comes from true strength in the Lord, power that comes by His word abiding in them.

The Jn 15:7 youth is more powerful than any college or pro athlete. Christ’s words abide in him or her, and those words overcome even the devil himself (cf. Rev 12:10–11). Perhaps you are a young person as you read this. Here is the greatest strength that you can have: to abide in Christ and have His words abide in you! How much we ought to respect and love those brethren who are youths!

And these three groups are meant to cover all believers. For, indeed, those who belong to the Lord are the excellent ones on the earth, in whom we ought to delight (cf. Ps 16:3).

Dear reader, I hope this passage has rehabilitated for you the way you view and think about people. Let a believers’ connection to the Lord provoke you to great love, respect, and service for him!

Who are some little children in the church? Who are some elderly? Who are some youths? How should we think of them, feel about them, speak of them, and treat them?

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us, for we have not valued our brethren like we ought. We have treated little children in the church as if they were of little importance, even when they are trusting in Jesus’s Name for forgiveness and have come to know God as Father. We have treated the elderly as if they were of little value, although they have lived a life knowing the Creator of all things. And we have treated the young adults of the church as if their value was in the strength of their youth, rather than in the word of Christ’s power that dwells in them. Indeed, we have not even considered ourselves according to these values. So forgive us, we ask, and grant that we would be conformed to Christ, we ask in His Name, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP197 “Christian Unity” or TPH409 “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

First John chapter 2 verses 12 through 14. These are God’s words. I write to you little children because your sins are forgiven. You for his name’s sake. I write to you fathers because you have known him. Who is from the beginning? I write to you young men. Because you have overcome the wicked one.

I write to you little children. Because you have known thaw father. I have written to you fathers because you have known him. Who is from the beginning? I have written to you young men. Because you are strong. And the word of God abides in you. And you have overcome.

The wicked one. So far the reading of gods inspired and therein tort Well, in God’s Providence to us. In the same sorts of themes in first, John and Romans. And Romans, and Romans 12. Thinking about how when our minds are conformed to Christ’s mind. Then we offer our lives.

Out of love for the sake of the church, just like Christ. Gave himself out of love for the sake of the church. And then, First, John 2. Last week. Uh, giving our obedience to God’s Commandments, Christ’s Commandments, and especially the new commandment from the night that he was betrayed, or the old commandment that the church has had since Um, it began.

Uh, it’s described as both of loving one. Another as Christ has loved us and so there’s the overlap Now, one of the great mistakes that we make is esteeming people according to their worldly value or according to a set of worldly values. Rather than esteeming them, according to a being made in the image of God, in which case we will love and respect and care for all men.

But, Being United to Christ. So whether that is United to Christ’s covenantally those who are set apart to him in his church or United by Christ eternally and livingly by faith in him. We are to treat those who are in the church with what is called the Judgment of Charity.

That we not be like those who think that. Um, That we should always be wondering whether someone is really converted or not. No. The Lord tells us to do that with ourselves. Not necessarily to wonder, but at least let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall and examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith.

That doesn't necessarily mean you doubt yourself. But certainly everyone in the church, we are. Operate accordingly to a judgment of Charity. Um, treating them as Christians, treating them as United to Christ. Uh and knowing that the if the church is following scripture instruction, this is going to be generally true of the membership and we leave unto God.

Whether or not it is specifically true about any particular individual. Now one group within the church to whom this especially applies is the little children. Jesus says of the little children, not just that you must enter the kingdom, like a child. But he says of such is the kingdom.

That little children little babies in the church. Have every right? Uh, as a church member of being near the Lord and being counted as those. Who belong to him? And so the Apostle here is giving us an example because we in our remaining fleshliness Might according to worldly values, so someone's knowledge or ability or class or their connections, whom they know.

Uh, those sorts of things, we might, uh, treat people as more or less valuable, according to those measures according to those metrics. He gives himself now as the example. He is giving his life as an apostle out of love for the church and for every sort of person in the church.

And just now the thing that he is doing out of his love, for them out of his love for Christ is writing this Epistle to them. And writing this epistle even also for us. And he uses three categories here as a way of summarizing the whole church, the little children, the fathers, the elderly, and then the youths, and he addresses each group twice.

In this description, both teaching us whatever season we are in. Uh, that which is most important and most valuable about ourselves and teaching us whatever season they are in. Uh, what is? Supremely valuable about each of the other people in the church. Sue says, I write to you little children because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

And then in the second go around. He says, I write to you little children because you have known the father So here. For the little children, like Sophia. Here is the great thing for you as a member of the church. The That you should strive for. Is that your sins would be forgiven for Jesus's name's sake?

That you would trust in Jesus and his name, which means the Lord saves, Yahweh saves that you would trust in him for the Forgiveness of your sins. And that you would know God as your father in Heaven. Who has adopted you in Jesus Christ. And given you his own Spirit to be the spirit of sonship the spirit of adoption for you.

These are the, the ABCs Of Christianity. And this is what all of the little children in the church, especially ought to be taught To trust in Jesus's name for the Forgiveness of their sins and to know God as their father, So that even as we teach you to obey, we say obey your parents in the Lord.

For this is right. So the little children, and we should see the little children of the church, as the ones, who are forgiven for Jesus's name's sake. The one who whatever else they know about God. The very first great thing they know about him is that he is their father in heaven and that he has identified them as his children on Earth.

By gathering them into his church, by putting his sign upon them by making them, participants and members in his Worship in his congregation. And so, We ought to treat a little child in the church as of Greater importance and weight, and dignity than the greatest noblemen or wealthy men in the world, who is outside of the church, who is out and whom, then we treat as being outside of Christ.

So, that's the little children in the second place. You have the fathers Now, in that culture, those who are fathers Those who are elderly were often esteemed. For those whom they have known personally, that the younger Generations have only heard about by reputation. Uh one example not too far after this, but connected to.

This is a man named polycarp. Who in 155, A.D at the age of 86 was martyred for his faith. And he confessed himself to, Have trusted in the Lord for 80 years and over 80 years and the Lord had never failed him once so he would not go. He would not turn against or deny the Lord to save his life, he'd rather die and they killed him.

But one of the things that polyclark was famous for in the churches was that he had known the Apostle John. He was old enough at that time that he and his life had been ministered to by the man by whom the Holy Spirit has given us. The very letter that we are writing or that we are reading and studying.

But that was not polycarp's great claim to fame, although he was famous for that, his great claim to fame. Was he knew him, who is from the beginning? The Living God, the Creator. That he has grown his whole life long in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and you could even hear it in his testimony.

Couldn't you? The familiarity not irreverence, but the familiarity with the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we come into our old age, may the Lord give us by his grace. To have. So grown in the knowledge of him, That we know him intimately and have fellowship with him in a way that is valuable to the rest of the church.

Uh, and may, we think of those who are elderly in our church, Who have walked with the Lord for a long time and have a familiarity of him and with him and a knowledge of him, as those who have known him, who is from the beginning? The Apostle gives the fathers the elderly, the same description in both places.

And then the one in which, Most of you fit. Uh, the youths. Then the first go around. He says you have overcome the wicked one and the second one he says you are strong the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the wicked one. Yes are strong.

They still have their strength and their energy. Not just a body, but even also of mind and yet while the world looks at those things from an Earthly and temporal standpoint and so you can see how our culture worships athletes, which also took place to some extent in the Roman era and not just athletes, but soldiers as well.

That's what the world looks at in the you. But Christian youth have a greater strength. The strength of belonging to Christ, the strength of being in the process of sanctification. Well, as we have already heard that

You know, as we are going to As we are going to hear in the next chapter for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, which we recently heard in a Sabbath school lesson on persevering through sanctification and that we need to be pursuing sanctification.

Well, if you are a youth in the church here is where you show the greatness of the strength that you have not the muscles, which still hold their tone and build mass rather easily or comparatively easily for you. But that in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are killing sin.

You are destroying the works of the devil. You are overcoming the evil one. This is the great power more, uh, more powerful, and strong than any pro, or college athlete. And he says, you are strong and the word of God abides in you. You because as John 15 7, if you abide in Christ, his word abides in you, and as you ask according to his word, you will have whatever you ask.

And so, you are those Mighty ones in Revelation, 12 verse 11? Who overcome the devil the evil one. Uh by the blood of the lamb and the word of your testimony because it is his word that is abiding in you. This is the great strength of Youth and this is why for Christian children who know that this is their strength, we should esteem them more greatly than the strongest unbelievers in the world.

The most capable unbelievers in the world for they have nothing. That is worth comparing to the strength of being united, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so these are the ones, these are the great ones on the earth. That Psalm 16 says, The Godly ones on the earth, the Saints of the Earth, the Godly ones they are, the excellent ones in whom is my delight because they have been consecrated to God.

They belong to him. We are lagging in our love for believers when we are lagging in our love for the Saints in the church. Uh, let us Let us remember that. They are united to Christ and that whether they are little children or whether they are elderly, or whether they are in the season of Youth, Those who belong to Christ have a greater dignity by the values of scripture.

We are to esteem them higher and love them more dearly than anyone else in the world, they should be precious to us and we should spend our lives. Out of love. For them. Let's pray. Our gracious Gardener Heavenly father. We thank you. For even the way that you have arranged in your Providence, that we would be in this passage.

Um, Right leading into a parallel. Passage in Romans 12, we pray. That you would help us. In the next half an hour, that intervenes that your spirit would keep. Biblical thinking upon our hearts and on our minds that we would be prepared to hear your word preached that we would be prepared to call upon your name with the congregation.

And so give us by your spirit. This Fellowship that we have with you in Christ and make us to love your church to love them every individual member of your church. Ask in Jesus name. Amen.