

Grateful Assurance

1 John 2:12-14

Intro:

A Photo album is a treasured keepsake.

When someone loses their home in a fire or other disaster (like Hurricane Katrina) people mourn the loss of their photos.

These pieces of paper are a record of memories.

They record the people we love, the milestones of our lives, and the moments we want to cherish.

They are a pictorial reminder of all we have to be grateful for.

As we gathered or in some cases we will gather yet today with family and friends to celebrate our Thanksgiving these are the blessings we will normally remember and talk about.

On Thursday Dru and I met with my family and there was a lot of pictures being taken.

Flashes of cameras and people smiling at the camera.

In 1 John 2:12-14 John draws our attention to some additional things for which we need to be grateful.

If you will, he gives us some pictures to remind us of the things that should provoke the deepest kind of gratitude and thanksgiving in us.

Up to this point in the letter John has challenged us to grow deeper in the faith.

John knows we may be feeling overwhelmed with this walk in Christ.

In this section John takes a few verses to encourage his readers by reminding them of some important facts.

12 I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name.

13 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 evil one.

I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

I have several questions immediately after reading these words.

Why does John reference children, fathers and young men?

Why so repetitive?

Why in this order?

Why doesn't he talk about mothers and young women?

What's the point?

Some believe "children" was a term for the entire church and John was referring to older and younger believers with the terms "fathers" and "young men".

Some believe John was referring to people of different levels of physical and spiritual maturity.

No one believes John wanted to exclude women here.

Commentators spend a great deal of time discussing these things but all they are really doing is sharing their theory.

After reading many such discussions I admit that the discussion seems to be a waste of time.

It seems better for us to ask, "**What is it that John is trying to teach all of 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.

John has been challenging us to a deeper Christianity.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed as we hear his words.

I think John knew that.

So now he stops to remind us of three important truths that will help us be real deal 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 that we should be grateful for.

These are three things that should be true of everyone who is a child of God.

1. We are Forgiven in His Name

v. 12 *“ I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name.”*

The very first thing we need to know as believers is the fact that our sins are forgiven on account of His name, the name of Jesus.

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.

Now please hear this.

A true believer is not longing for forgiveness, hoping for forgiveness, or uncertain about forgiveness.

The True Believer in Christ has been forgiven. Amen!

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, **“Well, I hope so”** or **“I’m doing the best I can”** or **“I don’t know”** or **“I’m not really sure.”**

Now, Christian believer, listen to me, This is not the Christian’s position!

The Christian says, “My sins have been forgiven!”

Listen to the words of this old hymn and get blessed by them:

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, Washed in His blood!
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

When the author of this great hymn, blind - Fanny Crosby wrote this song, she never had a doubt about her salvation and changed life.

Note the basis of this assurance.

It is **“on account of His name”**.

This means that we are forgiven because of the character and actions of Jesus.

We are not forgiven because of what we have done but because of what He has done for us.

The life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus all combine to make it possible for you and me to be forgiven through Him, the precious Son of God.

He took the penalty that we justly deserved.

There is a great story told by a person who was in a youth issues class at Hannibal LaGrange College back in 2002.

He tells this story: I left work early so I could have some uninterrupted study time right before the final in my Youth Issues class.

When I got to class, everybody was doing their last minute studying.

The teacher came in and said he would review with us for just a little bit before the test.

We went through the review, most of it right on the study guide, but there were some things he was reviewing that I had never heard of.

When questioned about it, he said that they were in the book and we were responsible for everything in the book.

We couldn't really argue with that.

Finally it was time to take the test.

And the professor said: "Leave your test face down on the desk until everyone has one and I'll tell you when to start."

When we turned them over, every answer on the test was filled in! The bottom of the last page said the following:

"This is the end of the Final Exam. All the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an 'A' on the final exam. The reason you passed the test is because the creator of the test took it for you. All the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the A. You have just experienced ...Grace."

He then went around the room and asked each student individually,

"What is your grade?"

Do you deserve the grade you are receiving?

How much did all your studying for this exam help you achieve your final grade?"

Now, this student said, I am not a crier by any stretch of the imagination, but I had to fight back tears when answering those questions and thinking about how the Creator had passed the test for me.

Discussion afterward went something like this:

"I have tried to teach you all semester that you are a recipient of grace. I've tried to communicate to you that you need to demonstrate this gift as you work with young people. Don't hammer them; they are not the enemy. Help them, for they will carry on your ministry if it is full of GRACE!"

The professor said he had never done this kind of final before and probably would never do it again, but because of the content of many of our class discussions, he felt like we needed to experience Grace.

Application:

The truth of the gospel is that even though we deserve God's wrath, we have been extended mercy and love.

It is vitally essential that we hear this.

There are many of you that I suspect believe you will never be accepted by God because of the things you have done.

You doubt that God could ever forgive you.

You want to believe the message of Grace but somehow you feel that you are outside the reach of His mercy.

When we feel this way we imply that the life of Jesus was not of sufficient value to pay for our sin!

Jesus gave His life so that you and I could be forgiven and might be sure of our eternal destiny in Heaven.

If you have truly put your trust and confidence in what Jesus did for you, then you can say with absolute assurance,

"I am forgiven and I am going to Heaven."

We say this not because of some inflated sense of our own goodness, but because of our humble awareness of and gratitude for the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God gave His life so we might be forgiven and made right with God.

2. We Have Overcome the Evil One

v.13b I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

John next speaks to the young men.

There are great expectations on you at this stage of life.

This is the time we are at our physical strength.

This is the time when you face the challenges of higher education.

It is the time of greatest job advance.

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At this stage you are trying to conquer the world.

There are incredible time demands as you face the push of a job where you are trying to climb the ladder of success and the demands of family and the multitude of activities your kids are involved in.

This is the time of life when you often feel worn out and over extended.

This is also a time of life when temptation is the greatest.

Now men here me when I say this - there is great temptations in the areas of
sexual immorality,
material consumption,
the misuse of power, and
the confusion of priorities.

It is the time of life where Satan seems to focus the majority of your energy.

With this in mind, notice what John says.

“I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

In fact, he mentions overcoming the evil one twice.

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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 beaten.

We are not!

At this time of life when we feel so much pressure we are reminded that 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)

Illustration:

Imagine the United States military going into a small country for battle.

You know that this country is no match to the resources and arsenal of the USA.

These people fight hard but the end is not in doubt on either side.

This is the way it is in our spiritual lives.

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 those who are believers.

Yes, - There will be wounds, there will be setbacks (because of our unwillingness to trust God) **but there will NOT be defeat if we stay faithful to Him and trust Him for help and deliverance.**

There are two implications that come with this truth.

1. First, we need to stop making excuses.

We (including me) spend a lot of time excusing various behaviors by saying, "it's just the way I am".

John wants us to understand that we don't have to behave in sinful ways any more.

The power to overcome sin is within us. The Power is the Holy Spirit enabling us to be overcomers.

The Devil cannot overcome us unless we give him the power and the right to do so.

Think of it like this: once you were imprisoned by sin.

When Jesus came along he provided a pardon for you from your sinful lifestyle, He unleashed the shackles on your legs, and opened all the doors in front of you.

If you choose to stay in the jail cell . . . it is your choice.

You don't have to remain there anymore.

You are free! Take hold of the victory given to you by Christ Jesus!

2. Second, we need to live in the strength of the Lord.

God has equipped us for victory.

His power has overcome Satan and the power of darkness.

And Christian friend, listen to me - We need to live in that power.

Paul tells us, ***"put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand- stand."* (Eph. 6:13)**

Paul goes on in this passage to tell us about
faith,
truth,
peace,

righteousness,
salvation, and
the power of the Word of God.

He also tells us that we need to pray.

If we trust these truths that God has given us; as we dare to take God at His word and do what He says; we will discover that God knows exactly what He is doing.

Satan will come at us trying to get us with doubt.

He will try to make us tentative.

He will encourage us to trust in our own strength.

But - We must ignore these urges and hold fast to the One who has conquered Satan.

It won't always be easy.

In fact, most of the time it will be a struggle.

But the reality is that we learn to trust God by being put in situations where we have to trust Him.

We discover His strength when we are confronted with our weaknesses.

God allows Satan to continue to assault us because He wants us to learn to trust Him in practical and everyday ways.

3. Thirdly, We Know God

14 “ I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.”

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.

Have you ever had someone speaking in a critical way to you about a friend or family member?

It is possible that you responded saying, “You just don't know them.”

What you mean is the other person doesn't know the heart, the character, the real person like you do.

This is the way we know God.

We already know God because His Holy Spirit comes and lives in us when we turn to Jesus.

But there is another sense in which we are coming to know God.

We do this by spending time with Him.

We come to know God as we learn to trust Him and dare to obey Him.

We come to know Him through prayer, worship, Bible study.

The more we get to know Him, the more trustworthy we find Him.

It is interesting that John emphasizes this to the Fathers.

As we get older (in life and 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 matters.

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 are able to 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 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.”** [The Last Battle]

CONCLUSIONS

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 John has reminded us of three of our richest blessings

- 1. We have been forgiven and granted eternal life due to the work of Jesus Christ**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. 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 that liberate us from defeat and bondage; they give us confidence no matter what the circumstance we might be facing.

However, these assurances and blessings are only given to those who have truly trusted Jesus as their rescuer and surrendered to Him as their leader in life.

If this does not describe you, then I must tell you the truth: you stand condemned before God.

You are vulnerable to the Devil's ploys, justifications, and delusions.

Though you may believe yourself to be blessed because you have much, in truth, what you have is a curse.

What you have is making you believe you are good and causing you to feel you are self-sufficient; that you don't need God.

Your "blessings" are actually like poisoned chocolate; it tastes good now but it will ultimately kill you.

You need what Jesus alone can give you.

If you will face the truth of your spiritually lost condition and turn to Jesus, then this can change.

You can find forgiveness and a guarantee of Heaven;
you will have power to overcome the temptations of life;
and you will come to know the God who is life Himself.

Browse through your albums.

Remember the blessings of God.

But also browse these verses (you may want to copy them and put them in your album).

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Give thanks not only for what God has given, also give thanks for who you are as a child of God.

Be grateful for these blessed assurances.