

The Epistles of John

Week 27: 1 John 2:12-14

What we have in 2:12–14
are words of reassurance
and encouragement.

The author does not want
his readers to think that he
places them in the same
category as the separatists.

1 John 2:12-14

Triplet One 2:12–13

I am writing to you, little children,

because [or that] your sins are forgiven on account of his name.

I am writing to you, fathers,

because [or that] you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young people,

because [or that] you have conquered the evil one.

1 John 2:12-14

Triplet Two 2:14

I write to you, children,

because [or that] you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers,

because [or that] you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young people,

because [or that] you are strong,

and the word of God abides in you,

and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:12-14

There appears to be no definitive answer to this triple pattern of groups in the church, nor a compelling explanation of why they are given twice. There is a wide range of opinions on the nature and purpose of the six statements.

1 John 2:12-14

In these six references to “dear children,” “fathers,” “young men,” John is using endearing words to show his love for them. All of these terms are endearing terms.

1 John 2:12-14

Drawing upon an analysis of Greco-Roman rhetorical patterns, there is reason for considering this use of *tekna* (little children) and *paidia* (children) as a general reference to the entire community. These verses are a classic example of *distributio* where the writer or speaker initially addresses the entire group and then mentions specific subgroups within the larger group

1 John 2:12-14

Added support for this suggestion that little children refers to the general populace of John's faith community is that what he ascribes as true of the teknia is doctrinally true of all Christians. All believers—whether fathers, young people, or little children—should know that their sins are forgiven on account of his name.

1 John 2:12-14

One of the three issues associated with all three verses of this unit: how are we to understand the preposition *hoti*? There are two options. First, the word can be viewed in a causal sense. In other words, the author is using it to explain why he is writing this letter; and in that case it should be translated '*because*'. The alternative is a declarative sense, with John making a statement, and thus *hoti* would be translated '*that*'. Although scholars are probably correct to note the possibility of both meanings, the context would certainly lead us to place more weight on the declarative option: **that**.

1 John 2:12-14

John knows that his readers are believers. Why would he need to tell them he is writing because they do believe? But considering the crisis they face—a split in the community, new doctrines introduced, and some people probably still wavering over the question of who is correct—John is making declarative statements about them and their status so as to reassure them of their correctness in remaining true to the Johannine community.

1 John 2:12-14

Children

I am writing to you, little children,

that your sins are forgiven on account of his name.

I write to you, children,

that you know the Father.

1 John 2:12-14

- In v12 is the first and most fundamental word of encouragement that John can give to all members of the church: *that in the past they were forgiven of their sins and that this forgiveness remains effective in their lives.* “Have been forgiven” is in the perfect tense
- This is the first reference to the “name” in the epistles. This understanding may spring from a Semitic belief that the name stands for the identity of that person, and to know that name gives the person access to that power. “On account of his name” stands for the person and work of Jesus in its totality.

1 John 2:12-14

Fathers

I am writing to you, fathers,

that you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, fathers,

that you know him who is from the beginning.

1 John 2:12-14

Young Men/People

I am writing to you, young people,

that you have conquered the evil one.

I write to you, young people,

that you are strong,

and the word of God abides in you,

and you have overcome the evil one.

Application for This Week

John is addressing here the entire church which is made of those who are teenagers to adults, and those who are older members.

He recognizes the strengths and abilities of the two groups while also acknowledging the faith they have in common.

It is clear that he considers it important that these two groups lean on each other and work together in love and in the name of Jesus.

Homework

My blog with past lessons is:

www.UnapologeticallyJohn.com

Thank you for coming!

See you back next week