

COPYRIGHT 2019 Paul Kemp and Christ Church, all rights reserved. Feel free to make copies for distribution in personal and/or small group Bible Study.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

OUR PRIVILEGED POSITION | JOHN 2:12-14

You may not remember this, but back in the 'nineties, the slogan of American Express was "membership has its privileges." One of the T. V. Spots featured a man in a tailored suit securing a first class seat on an overbooked flight, cashing in bonus points at an ATM, flagging down a taxi while everyone else is waiting in the rain, walking into a grade school cafeteria where an elementary school musical is underway, taking a seat by a charming women we assume is his wife, who points out their daughter, the third plotted plant from the left. I guess the idea is that owning an American Express Card allows you to be a successful entrepreneur and parent all at the same time. All of that is nice, but most of my credit cards will do the same thing, without an annual fee. You may get a little more, but you pay a lot more. And even if you have a card that allows you to book a first class seat on an overbooked flight, first class seats are never cheap.

We used to open our new comer's coffee by highlighting the privileges of membership in the local church. You serve more. Give more. Show up earlier. Stay late. Sing loud. Clean up after everyone else. Get involved in community where relationships are messy. There are times when you go home exhausted. Authentic biblical community calls for us to "bear one another's burdens" and give our lives away for the sake of Christ, his church, and the gospel.

So is being a part of God's family another one of those places where we make a considerable investment and get very little in return? Not at all. John reminds us that the privileges of being in God's family are rich and deep. They come to us at the expense of another. They are gifts to enjoy rather than a status to be earned.

John begins his letter by challenging us to be brutally honest about our relationship with Christ. He tells us:

1:6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth

1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

2:4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

2:9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.

And while some claim to be in Christ, when in reality they are not, John is confident that most of his readers possess an authentic faith. He writes to reassure them. In poetic fashion he writes to children, the mature and the young, to remind them of the foundational privileges they experience and continue to experience as part of God's family.

THE PRIVILEGES OF CHILDHOOD (vv. 12, 14a)

12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

14a I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father.

1. Nothing is more foundational to the Christian life than forgiveness of sin. What does forgiveness entail, and why is it essential for our relationship with Christ?
2. The moment we come to Christ, all of our sins are forgiven—past, present, and future. There is still a need, however, for us to confess our sins to maintain a vital relationship with Christ. Describe the difference between the forgiveness we have already received and our need to confess our sins and experience his forgiveness on a daily basis.
3. John reminds us that our sins have been forgiven "on account of his name." Why is it essential for us to remember that our sins have been forgiven for Christ's sake rather than our own?
4. What do you think it means to know God as "the Father?"
5. Why is it a privilege to know God as Father?

THE PRIVILEGE OF MATURITY (vv. 13a, 14b)

13a I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

14b I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

1. While John highlights the privilege of childhood as "knowing the Father," he describes the privilege of maturity as "knowing him who is from the beginning." What is the difference between knowing God as "Father" and knowing "him who is from the beginning?"
2. Why is it essential that we know and relate to God as "Father?"
3. Why is it essential that we know and relate to God (or Jesus) as "him who was from the beginning?"
4. How can we cultivate intimacy with God while growing in reverence for God?
5. What happens when we cultivate intimacy without reverence?
6. What happens when we cultivate reverence without intimacy?

THE PRIVILEGE OF YOUTH (vv. 13b, 14c)

13b I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

14c 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.

1. While John offers two distinct privileges of childhood (your sins are forgiven, and you know the Father), a single privilege of maturity (you know him who is from the beginning), and a single privilege of youth (you have overcome the evil one), when John repeats the privilege of youth in verse 14, however, he pulls back the curtain to reveal its source (you are strong, and the word of God lives in you).
 - a. What do you think it means to overcome the evil one?
 - b. What is the source of our strength?
 - c. What does it mean to have the word of God living in you?
2. John has listed four incredible graces in these three verses—the forgiveness of sin, knowing the Father, knowing him who is from the beginning and overcoming the evil one. How can we more fully appreciate and experience these graces as we continue in the faith?