

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
August 8, 2021
“The Church”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Church Camp over Labor Day Weekend

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The truest form of forgiveness is _____. Absent repentance, which is a commitment to radical change, we still forgive, but we set new boundaries. Doing it that way means that it is always _____. To make it better, we should set boundaries not to protect ourselves, but to protect _____.

“Darkness” personified takes away your _____. Samson (Judges 16:21).
 Blindness is opposition to what Jesus is trying to accomplish (Matthew 12:30).
 “Hate” is juxtaposed with “_____.”

The church is the _____ as a whole and each individual has a part.

I JOHN 2:12-14 ~

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

To write, γράφω (gřä-fō), (Revelation 1:11, etc.).

“Little children,” in verse 12, τεκνίον (tĕk-nĕ-ōn), as in teknonymy.

“Children,” in verse 13, παιδίον (pī-dĕ-ōn), as in pediatrician.

The whole church can then be subdivided into two groups...

Older men, here called “Fathers,” and elsewhere called “Elders.”

“Young men” have victory νικάω (nĕ-kä-ō), root word νίκη (nĕ-kā), as in Nike shoes.

“Young men” are strong enough and grounded in the Word enough to remain
 _____ over the desires of the “Evil one.”

“Your sins are forgiven” is a perfect tense verb stressing...

If you are a Christian, you are forgiven and why?

Here John reassures us that we all fall short, but, (Lamentations 3:22&23).

You cannot experience the unity of the Holy Spirit _____ of the church.
 (Ephesians 4:4-7).

 Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

*Welcome
Friends*



John

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

*Unforgiveness is like drinking poison,
hoping it hurts the other person.*



The last time we were together we talked a little bit more about forgiveness...

One final thought on that subject. The truest form of forgiveness is forgetfulness. People often say, "I'll forgive, but I'll never forget." Perfect forgiveness means total forgetfulness. It's what God does. He casts our sin "As far as the east is from the west" - He turns "The other cheek." Perfect forgiveness is to forget entirely, granting a clean slate, and giving a fresh opportunity to do the exact same thing all over again. You haven't perfectly forgiven as long as you remember the offense.



For us perfect forgiveness is possible when our offender genuinely repents. Absent that repentance, which is a commitment to radical change, well, without that we still forgive, but we set new boundaries, and then we forget to a degree. Doing it that way means that it is always imperfect. To make it better, we should set boundaries not to protect ourselves, but to protect our offender from their inevitable return to sin, which is due to their unrepentant heart. You cannot stop them from sinning again, but you can stop them from dragging you into it as the object of their sin once again.



Besides forgiveness, we talked a lot more about getting along with each other. We finished with verse 11, “The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” I hear an awful lot of unthinking, and ignorant, and even appalling things coming from self-identifying Christians that prove this passage true.

Unforgiveness, frustration, impatience, anger, and bitterness “Blind” a person. Notice that “Darkness” is personified - “Darkness” takes away your sight. In ancient times it was common for a victorious army to

blind the leaders of the defeated army. Physically blind men posed little military threat in the future. You might remember Samson's fate in Judges 16:21, "Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes."

Darkness defeats a person and then blinds their eyes. It is, of course Spiritual blindness, which is actually far worse than physical blindness, not only because it may last for infinitely longer than a mere human lifespan, but because it affects the Kingdom of God here and now so negatively... it hurts the Body of Christ as an active assault on what Jesus is trying to build. Beyond all of that, as a total blindness, the blind are unaware of their blindness. While a physically blind person is keenly aware that they cannot see, a spiritually blind person still thinks that they see clearly.

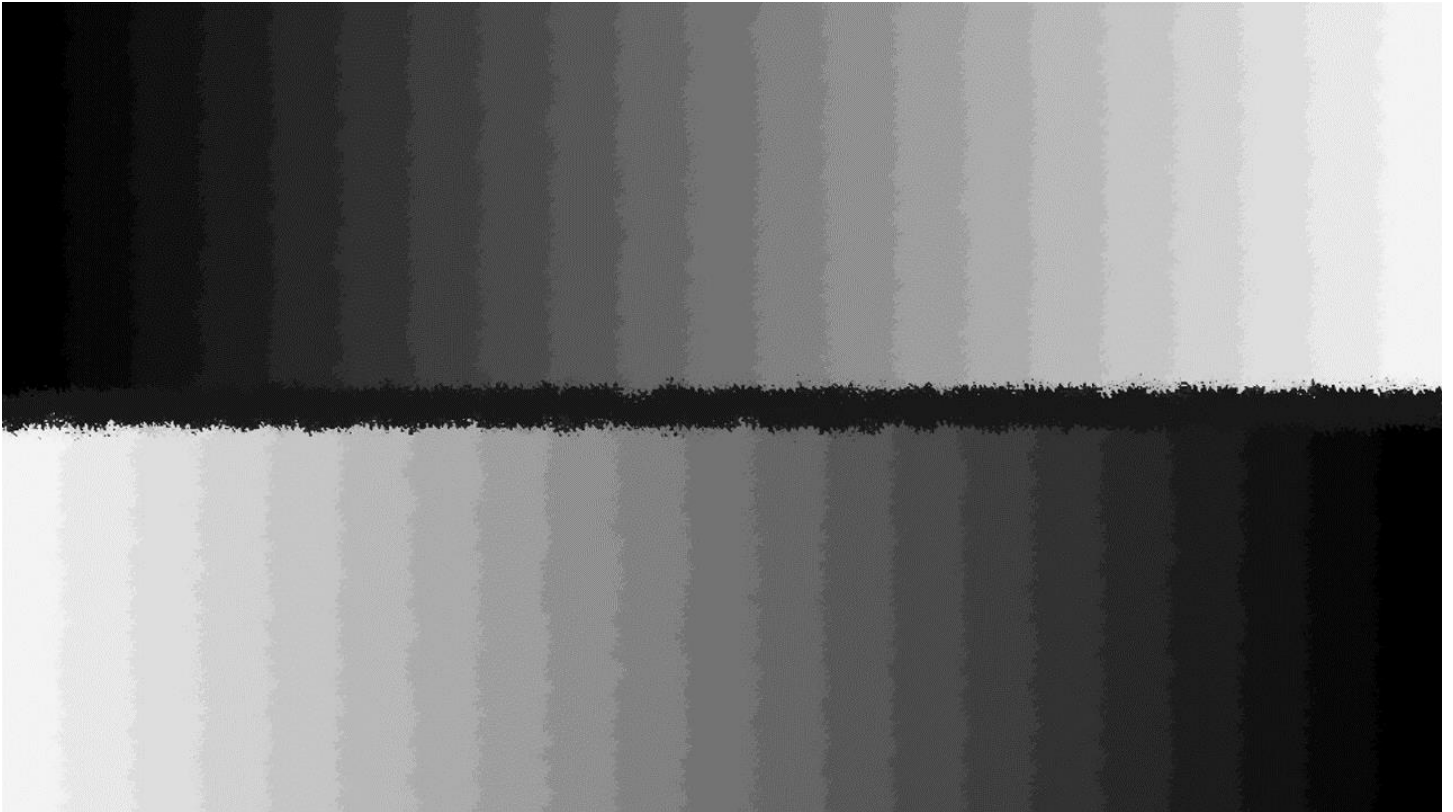
To be blind, as the Bible indicates here, means that you are in immortal danger, it can also put you in mortal danger, which, in itself, should scare you, but far worse, the immortal danger jeopardizes your eternity. Because to be blind in this way means that you are part of the opposition to what Jesus is trying to accomplish. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 12:30,

“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”



The absolute black and white, no grey middle ground nature of this is simply the way God views the issue. The two cannot meet in the middle. It's the same thing we're seeing in verse our 11, "Hate," is juxtaposed, not with "She's not my cup of tea," not with "He's annoying," not with a kind of detente, or neutrality, not with some general ambivalence, not even with being cordial and polite - "Hate" is juxtaposed with "Love."

This is a perfect example where people take the Bible out of context to create a doctrine that is a lie straight out of hell. No one can take verse 11 as an independent thought by saying to themselves, "I'm not blinded by darkness because I don't hate. I may not like very much, but I don't hate." Remember, originally there were no verses at all. Context demands that we understand "Hate," not on its own, but together with its counterpoint "Love." According to the Bible, in this place, those are the only two possibilities. You either love your brother and so love the church, or you hate your brother and so hate the church. You are either with Jesus, or you are against Jesus. You are either actively building the Body of Christ, or you are actively destroying the Body of Christ. There can be no middle ground according to God.



Yet, for us, the world is not black and white, but rather it is every shade of grey. That, in itself, is the disease of spiritual blindness. Once I believe that there are degrees of compliance, degrees of obedience, degrees of “Love,” and “Hate,” giving me a whole range of possibilities between the two, I have set myself up for thinking that I’m okay as long as I stay mostly towards the love end of the spectrum, when in reality I have put myself squarely in the middle of the “Hate” camp from God’s perspective. That’s the blindness.



JESUS + NOTHING
= EVERYTHING

We are either Christ following lovers, or we are Christ denying haters... God's point here, is don't be deceived by the blindness that assumes that you're in the first position, by treading somewhere in the middle, because that is actually the second position.

What does that mean practically speaking? It means desiring conformity to Jesus by actively yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit to enable you to be a vibrant, productive, beneficial part of the church. That's not possible from home.

The Bible says
that the
church is the
household of
God, which is
itself His
family... The
church is the
people.



The church is the people as a whole and each individual has a part within that whole. Someone recently compared Christianity with the Borg from the Star Trek fantasy. If you're not familiar, it is a collective where every individual becomes such an integral part of the whole that their individuality ceases. It's not at all the same. Christians choose to join the collective and then every day after that we must continue to choose to cooperate within the collective. Each one of us doing our task assigned by Jesus. Unlike the Borg, or the goal of Buddhism, we Christians retain our autonomy and only through diligent prayer, constant vigilance,

and intentional self-sacrificing effort, do we add our distinctiveness to the collective.

Contrary to popular opinion the church is not you. The church is all of us together - it is the collective in a sense, and so, while the church is not you, it is less without you. Only when we all do our bit does the church reach its potential - only then is the desire of Jesus met.



1 John 2:12-14, 12I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13I am writing to you, fathers, because

you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been 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 evil one.

This is so weird, so misunderstood, so misinterpreted, “Little children,” “Fathers,” and “Young men,” in that order, so not an ordered progression, repeated twice, but in two different verb tenses, “I am writing,” “I have written.” There are just so many crazy ideas taught and preached about this passage, that instead of telling you what it doesn’t mean and why, I’m just going to tell you what it does mean.

First, it’s important to recognize that in these 3 verses John used the verb to write, γράφω (grä-fō), graphic, graffiti, autograph, photography, etcetera, 6 times. He used the verb a total of 13 times in this short letter. It’s a concept worth exploring. John also wrote in The Book of Revelation that Jesus told him to “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches”

(Revelation 1:11). To each of the 7, Jesus says, “To the angel of the church in...” that city, “Write.” The information in our passage today, as with the entire letter of I John, as with The Book of Revelation, as with the whole of the Bible, is to inform the church... It was written for a reason. It’s not to nonbelievers, and it’s not to individual Christians, it’s technically to Christians banded together as the church.



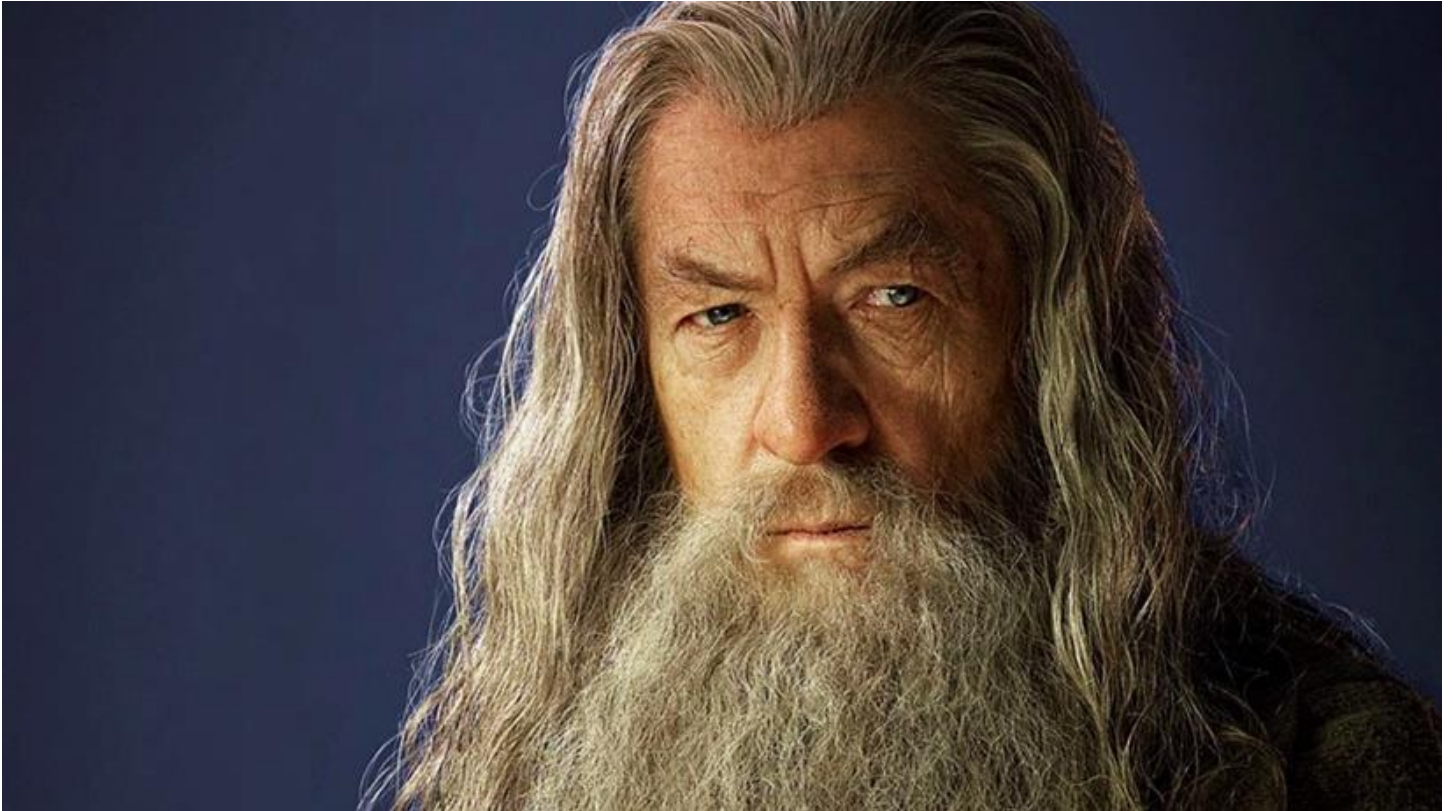
In context, the terms “Little children,” in verse 12, τεκνίων (tĕk-nĕ-ōn), giving us the word teknonymy (which is naming a child after a parent), and then “Children,” at the end of verse 13, παιδίων (pī-dĕ-ōn),

giving us words like pediatrician (a doctor specializing in children), mean the same thing - both terms mean the church. John in both places is referring to his Christian audience as a whole. As in every instance of the first term τεκνίον, and almost every instance of the second term παιδίον, found in the Bible, child refers to God's child, rather than to a miniature human being.

The whole church can then be subdivided into two groups - older and younger. When viewed from a male leadership perspective, older and younger men. Each of those two groups carries a different responsibility within the church to accomplish Christ's goal for the church.

Remember, the goal is to be united in love for God, and love for each other, and from that basis extending love to the Lost by sharing Jesus with them. Please remember all three are necessary. You are not part of the church unless you love God with all your life, love His other children by being a vibrant member of His church, and love unbelievers by actually sharing your Christian experience with them - with those outside of the church - which is to say, non-Christians. Personal

evangelism is not talking about God with another Christian you run into at the gas station, or at Walmart.



So, older men, here called “Fathers,” and elsewhere called “Elders,” serve to lead, to teach, and to disciple the younger men. That’s why both times John says of them only one, totally identical thing... “You know Him who has been from the beginning.” The point is that the “Elders” of the church have known Him for far longer than the “Young men.” It is supposed to be a maturity born from long established experience with the Lord. The “Elders” of the church “Know” the Lord.

Who can lead the church? People who have seen it all before. It is an unbiblical travesty that we take young men in their 20's and 30's and install them in local churches as pastors. An "Elder" is first and foremost an elder. Someone who has been around the block as a Christian and knows what they're talking about from vast actual experience, as well as from education. When I say that, people throw I Timothy 4:12 at me. Paul told Timothy not to allow the people to look down on him because of his youth. Paul took Timothy with him in about 50 A.D. when he was a young man - probably about 20 years old. Paul wrote the letter in question in about 65 A.D. Timothy was very young for Christian leadership at the age of about 35 and having spent 15 years learning church leadership directly from the Apostle Paul. "Elders" need to be elders. "Fathers" need to have enough maturity and experience to know how to be father figures to young men, not just to little kids.

I often meet young Christians in their 20's and 30's who think that they have all the answers, who think that if they could just get an opportunity, they would be much better at running things. It is called the arrogance of youth and it stems from an ignorance due to

inexperience. All older people also thought that they knew best when they were younger people as well.



Nothing is new under the sun and that's precisely why John then addresses the "Young men." In order for the church to work you need leaders and you need followers. Young men have a difficult time following old men for the reason I already gave among a host of other reasons. It is even more difficult today with our celebration of youth, and our cultural disdain for mature folks, which is an inevitable consequence of our postmodern, deconstructionist, resentment-driven, "Will to power."

Young people love to point out that just being old doesn't necessarily make you smarter. I agree. I'm actually not as smart as I was when I was younger. But, nowhere in the Bible is being smart a requirement for church leadership - being more conformed to Christ is the requirement. Well, believe it or not, that takes time. It takes a lot of time living through many varied experiences, and it takes commitment, which can only be assessed over time. Two important features of older men leading younger men are caution and flexibility. Hemingway said, "Old men don't grow wise, they grow careful." That equals leading with caution. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "The young man knows the rules, but the old man knows the exceptions." That's leading with flexibility.

The "Young men" have victory νικάω (nē-kä-ō), root word νίκη (nē-kā), as in Nike shoes, they have the victory over the "Evil one." This is not just another way to say that they are saved... It emphasizes the fact that as saved persons the "Young men" have self-control, because through Christ, Satan is no longer in charge of their lives. This has to do with the ability to self-sacrificingly serve the interests of the church, rather

than their own interests and agendas... Specifically, following the leadership set forth by Jesus.

In the second stanza this is repeated but added to it is the reassurance that through Christ the “Young men” are strong enough and grounded in the Word enough to remain victorious over the desires of the “Evil one.” What desires? To destroy the church by destroying the harmony by refusing to buy in to the program.



Think about young NBA players. They're the ones who were just selected ahead of thousands of talented college starters who would love to play. They were the

ones just handed a multi-year contract giving them tens, or hundreds of millions of dollars, before ever even lacing up for a practice, let alone a game. What can some old, washed-up, has-been, coach teach them! But what we know, and what has been repeatedly proven, is that no team has a prayer of winning a championship unless all the players buy in to the coach's scheme and play the role, that he wants them to play on the team. Team USA looked shaky in the Olympics because they did not play like a Popovich coached team.

To have all the "Little children" in loving harmonious relationship, we must be led by the mature men who "Know Him who has been from the beginning," with the full loyal support and assistance of the "Young men." Men who will take on the mantle of leadership far sooner than they know.



The two sequences of children, then fathers, then young men, are, as I said, in two different tenses. The first grouping is in the present tense, which in Greek stresses the ongoing nature of a thing and the second set is in the aorist tense, which in Greek is merely a statement of fact - it isn't really past tense, but more like just stating what is. Parmenides famously stated, "Whatever is, is." Well, that sums up the aorist tense.



Do you know what these are? “Past Tents.” The aorist is not the past tense, just the this is the way it is tense.

By doing it this way John makes it memorable, so therefore, both important and easily memorized. There’s no reason to memorize something that’s not important. So, it’s both.

It also serves the purpose of saying this is who you are as both an abiding reality and as an actual reality. What that means is that something really happened and there is no getting around it, now because it happened it has an effect that will remain.



What exactly is that? Well, John starts with precisely the same “Little children,” that he just used to open chapter 2, confirming that it refers to the entire church as a whole - to all Christians.

What does he say about them? “Your sins are forgiven.” That is a perfect tense verb stressing there is a present and so, ongoing reality based upon something that happened in the past. If you are a Christian, your sins were forgiven at some previous point and that past reality has changed your present reality. If you are a Christian, your sins, plural and so

entirely, have been, or we could say were, forgiven and as a consequence, your sins are forgiven even now.

Like “Overcoming the evil one,” this is more than just another way to say saved people. Here it stresses the fact that we humans do sin, but we also do stand forgiven. It follows then that we should not fear confessing our sin as we should expect forgiveness and we should forgive sin in others, because we are in the same boat.

If you are a Christian, you are forgiven and why? Because you wisely chose Jesus, because you are a dedicated Christian, because you are better than others at obeying the rules, because you are worth more than others... You are forgiven “For His Name’s sake.” The Eternal Word of God agreed to take on flesh as a helpless human and pay the price for your sins that you could never pay... God forgives because Jesus did that. Don’t ever pray “Lord forgive me because I... Fill in the blank.” Instead, always pray “Lord forgive me because Jesus paid.”



Why does John say that? John just finished saying repeatedly that if you are not an active, integral, beneficial member of a local church body working diligently not to offend others, apologizing genuinely when you do and truly forgiving those who offend you, you are not a Christian at all. In fact, you are a child of Satan.



Here John reassures us that we all get it wrong at times. We all fall short. We all make a mess of things, but praise be to God, there are new mercies in the morning. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22&23). Because that is true, the great prophet Jeremiah seeing the utter destruction of his nation proclaims that he has hope.

This Letter is full of pastoral compassion, but what’s even more important is the Truth. If we are Christ’s,

then there needs to be Christ-like evidence of that claim.

Because the second thing the Bible says about God's children in this place is that we know Him... My dear friends, if a person knows God, they know of His love, His compassion, His mercy, His grace, His patience, His goodness, His kindness, His gentleness, and it has made an impression upon them that changes who they are at a fundamental level.

We need to be made aware of that and we need to be reminded of that and we need to actively live that and Jesus wants us to do it in the church.

People are so ignorant of what God's Word actually says and what it actually means, and they are so ignorant of our 2,000 year-long-journey as the Body of Christ Jesus on earth. There are so many strongly held, completely wrong ideas about church it drives me to distraction.

You cannot experience the unity of the Holy Spirit outside of the church. Inside of the church you cannot experience unity without the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is, as the Bible declares, only “One body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-7).