

## ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR EVERY BELIEVER

(1 JOHN 2:12–14)

### What is True & What Christians Should Do:

*Those who truly love and know Jesus Christ gain victory over the evil one and sin, so know who you are in Christ and grow in spiritual maturity.*

#### 1.) I am writing to you ... (v. 12–13)

In stark contrast to the heresies of Gnosticism and other false teachers in John's day (regarding Jesus' deity/humanity), he now wants to provide assurance and point out truths of a maturing faith...

#### THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS:

- Little children because your sins have been forgiven (the word for 'little children' here is a personal form of address used by Jesus in a familiar, loving, address to His disciples or by an apostle or teacher to his "spiritual children" (see Jn. 13:33, 1Jn. 2:1, 28, 3:7, 4:4, 5:21, Gal. 4:19).
  - Believers are reassured in God's household. Our "sins have been forgiven" on account of Jesus' work and namesake (2:1–2). "Have been forgiven" is a fully completed action with effects ongoing into the future (i.e., sins are permanently forgiven). Christ died and satisfied the requirements of salvation, and Christ's work on the cross is still in effect today.
  - God does not forgive your sins because of anything you are, hope to be, nor because of anything that you have done or have suffered.
  - You are forgiven for Christ's name's sake. This is a sure ground of hope. If the pardon had been granted for our own work's sake, it might have been reversed upon our disobedience. But since sin is pardoned for Christ's sake, the pardon is irreversible (see also, Isa. 43:25).
  - "There is a sense in which every Christian is still a little child, a sense in which he ought to be so—ever dependent upon the great Father, ever ready to receive the word of the Father without questioning, ever teachable, ever restful in the Father's care, and full of love to Him who is his all in all."<sup>1</sup>

- Apostle John was likely in his 80s or older upon 1 John; thus, most around him were "children" (whether 14, 40, or 60 yrs).

#### TO THOSE WITH DIFFERING SPIRITUAL MATURITY:

- Fathers because they've known from the beginning
    - Those who are mature in the faith; John does not have in mind the men of the congregation only; similar to Paul's use of "brothers," John does not speak to the exclusion of women. However, men should be spiritual leaders both within their homes and within the church (Eph. 5:22-28, 1 Cor. 11:3, 1 Tim. 3:2–4, 2:8–15, 1 Pet. 3:1 1 Cor. 11:1–34, Eph. 6:4).
    - "From the beginning," meaning the pre-incarnate Christ (Jn. 1, 1 Jn. 1:1, 2:24, 3:11); the message passed about Jesus has not changed. This knowledge is anchored securely in the things of the past (not a new invention). The faith is grounded in the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not intellectual speculation or mysticism.
  - Young men because they have overcome the evil one
    - The wording "have overcome" is a completed action with effects into the future; thus, the defeat of the evil one was accomplished by Jesus through His cross and resurrection and remains in effect (Col. 2:15). Even though the world is under Satan's control for a time, born again Christians have victory (1 Jn. 3:8, 12, 5:18–20, Eph. 6:12–18) because of their faith in Christ; they are protected by Jesus Himself. When you are born again, Jesus secures victory over death for you.
    - John's not speaking of evil in the abstract; the "evil one" is Satan. He is ruler of this world (Jn. 8:44-47, 14:30, 16:11, Eph. 2:1-3, 6:12–13, 1 Pet. 5:8–10, Rev. 12:12, Ja. 4:4)
- #### 2.) (Confirming again what) I have written to you ... (v. 13–14)
- Children because you have known the father
    - Freed from sin, by "knowing the father" through His Son, Jesus Christ, Christians receive the gift of redemption and renewal in God's household; believers in Christ may cry out "Abba! Father" (Rom. 8:15).

- The word for ‘children’ in v. 14 denotes “spiritual” parent/child subordination (it normally refers to those below the age of puberty); it also denotes one who is open to instruction and one who is treasured in the way a parent treasures a child.
- **Fathers** because you have known him/beginning
  - “Mature in the faith, they care for the household of faith, watching over the feeble, strengthening and comforting them. These are able by their experience to answer naysayers, to edify the untaught, and to guide the ignorant. Their knowledge is deep, and they are, therefore, able to become teachers of others; they are men of spiritual force, and have come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus; therefore they are the solid strength of the church. If the young men are the church’s arm, these are the church’s backbone.” - Charles Spurgeon
  - We need to have many such Fathers, though it is a concern that our churches today are much like the early ones, of which Paul said, “You do not have many fathers” (1 Cor. 4:15).<sup>1</sup>
- **Young men** because:
  - “You are strong” (see Dt. 31:6, Josh. 1:7) (not physical strength; their strength comes from their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose victory over the evil one enables theirs).
  - “The Word of God abides in you.” Through constant knowledge of the Word, believers have communion with Jesus Christ and thus with the Father (Jn. 14:6). They gain direction, control, and spiritual energy for spiritual battle. You keep/observe/guard/put the Word of God (or what God has said) in your heart. It then guides your decisions and actions.
  - “You have overcome the evil one.” Given the heresies of John’s day, the “young men” had withstood evil attempts to lure them away from the community of believers.

## KEY POINTS:

- The term “because” implies that Christians possess the spiritual ability (via the Holy Spirit) to respond properly to evil temptation and to live in the light and not fall prey to the world’s lusts and temptation. Christian maturity is the basis of John’s encouragement and confidence.
- Christians “know” the Father and stand “forgiven” in the very way that the Old Testament promised the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34). New covenant believers have the law of God written on their hearts, and they are taught by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in each of them. All Christians know Christ and God the Father through the Son, but a deeper spiritual relationship is an indicator of mature believers. The Holy Spirit (Spirit of Christ) guides the Christian believer (Jn. 14:26, 15:26, see also Isa. 9:6)
- John wrote these things to assure Christians of their place in the Kingdom of God (given the opposition and false teachers faced at that time).

## APPLICATION (v. 12–14):

- ✓ Christians should live in the victory already won! So, we all should continuously strive to grow in spiritual maturity!
- ✓ Your sins are completely forgiven, do not live in the past but look to the future. How will you glorify Christ TODAY? Do not allow the devil to drag you into the pig pen of past sins.
- ✓ God’s promises in Christ will come to pass: we have eternal life. So, how do you live your life? Are you walking in victory in Christ, knowing how Scripture speaks of your heavenly home? Or do you live handicapped in fear of men? Illness? Death? Circumstances?
- ✓ Christians should strive to know God’s Word and allow it to abide in them (i.e., Does the Bible guide your life, or do you?)
- ✓ You cannot overcome the devil on your own and you cannot know the Father apart from Jesus Christ, so have you been re-born spiritually?

<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 John*, ed. Elliot Ritzema, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Jn 2:12–14.