

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 13- You Have Overcome

Let's read **1 John 2:12-14**

We are continuing our study of 1 John and we are about 20% through this letter (21 out of 105 verses). And in these first 21 verses, John has been laying the foundation of what it means to be in True Fellowship with God. That we can have the assurance of Eternal Life in Him.

And now that John has laid this foundation, he pauses to give his little children, those who are in the Fellowship, the encouragement and the confidence that we are in Him and that we have the means to persevere in this world. I see this next section, 2:12-14, as a launching pad that from this point he tells us how to deal with the evil of the world. From here to the end of the book, John is giving his children the encouragement to persevere through darkness of this world. Because the darkness is passing away and the True Light is already shining. As Paul says in **Ephesians 5:8-14**, walk as children of the Light!

When we look at the structure of these next 3 verses, many people think there are three different groups of people he is speaking to: the little children, the young men, and the fathers. To understand the meaning of these three verses, we need to understand who these people are. Some scholars think John could be referring to a progression of spiritual growth: little children... young men... fathers. Other scholars attribute these distinctions as relating to spiritual maturity, and others think he is literally speaking of the physical age of these people. So who are these people John is referring to?

I think this all comes clear when we understand who the little children are. John begins this section in verse 12 with a direct address to his little children, *teknion*, **τεχνίον**. Understanding this word gives us some insight into who John is writing to and the heart of this letter. This word, **τεχνίον**, is only used 8 times in the NT, and John is the only writer that uses this word. 7 of those times are in this epistle, 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; and the eighth is in John 13:33, when Jesus addressed His disciples as little children the night before His crucifixion.

When John uses this word, he has in mind his dearly beloved children in Ephesus. John starts this section saying, "little children", *teknion*, **τεχνίον**. Not because he is writing to little children physically or spiritually, but because he is writing this letter to those who believe; his little children and the children of God as a whole. This is a common way we see John address his flock, **1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21**. These are Christians who have received the command of everlasting life by receiving Jesus Christ.

So I think trying to apply spiritual growth into this text is forcing the text, namely because little children does not mean spiritually immature, this is his address to his flock. There are no doubt different levels of Christians in every church, but I don't think that is what John is trying to point out here.

In addition to these "little children", John mentions two other groups, the young men and the fathers. But I think John is simply using these terms as a metaphor to include all his little children. Just as "little children" is a name for the whole range of the believers, when John refers to young men and fathers, I believe the idea is that he is writing to his little children, both "young and old alike".

Because when you look at the specific commendation John gives to these groups, they are not specifically meant for only these people. It's not just the fathers, "that have known Him from the beginning", and it is not just for the young men to "overcome the wicked one and have the Word of God abiding in them". This is for all the little children, both young and old alike. All who will apprehend Eternal Life through Jesus Christ. I believe John is using this expression like Joel did in Joel 2:28 when he said "*And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.*" This is a representation of all flesh. So I think John is saying the same thing, "all my little children, old and young alike..."

So verse 12 opens his address to all his little children. These are the dearly beloved that John has in mind when he is writing this letter. And the reason he writes these next three verses is to assure his little children of everlasting life. This is the ultimate goal of this letter, that's why we keep coming back to it, **1 John 5:13**. John is writing to those who believe that they might know that they have eternal life. The command from heaven is everlasting life, John 12:50 and these "little ones" have received this command by believing in Jesus Christ, and John is giving them this assurance.

Many times in this letter, John uses the phrase, "I am writing to you **so that**", ... so that your joy might be full, 1:4; so that you might not sin, 2:1; so that you know those who are trying to deceive you, 2:26; so that we might know that we have eternal life, 5:13.

But in these next 3 verses, John rephrases this slightly and 6 times John says, "I write to you **because...**" This is a word of assurance. He is writing to his readers, his "little children", *teknion*, *τεχνίον*, because your sins are forgiven, 2:12; because you have known Him, 2:13; because you are strong, 2:14; because the Word of God abides in you, 2:14; because you have overcome the wicked one, 2:14... John is giving them encouragement and hope. The hope of victory in eternal life with God.

He is writing this way because it's a proven fact that when people know they are winning, they can endure a tremendous amount of pressure and resistance even in the midst of hard times. This is an innate characteristic that God has given us to motivate us, Hebrews 6:19- *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...*; Hebrews 10:35- *...do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward*. Hebrews 12:1-2⁻¹ *... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*. But if this hope is gone, the drive and passion will pass away.

So John writes this letter to encourage and strengthen his "little children" in the hope of everlasting life with Jesus, **1 John 3:3**. So I believe the purpose of this section is to give encouragement to strive against the enticing draw of the world and all the lust in it because from this point forward to the end of the book, we see there is a battle with the evil one, with the world and all the lust therein.

Verse 12 is an opening introduction to all the faithful children of God. This is the letter to faithful believers, children of God. He begins with the foundational assurance: the forgiveness of sins.

¹² I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

¹² Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεχνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

All believers, all *teknia*, *τεχνία*, no matter their spiritual maturity or age, all have their sins forgiven. Forgiveness of sins is the foundation of the new birth, and this forgiveness is through Jesus because He is the propitiation for our sins; the satisfying, atoning sacrifice that appeased God's Righteous Judgement, 2:2. And because He is the propitiation and our Advocate, our High Priest, He has forgiven and continues to forgive, *aphiemi*, *ἀφίημι*, our sins, 1:9. Remember our definition of forgiveness from 1:9, "to purposely expel away from with much force and deliberation".

And now in 2:12 John adds another clarifying element to our forgiveness, that it is *διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ*, **because of His Name**. It is because of His Name that our sins are forgiven. The judgement and wrath of our sin was laid on Jesus at the cross, therefore it has been expelled or divorced away from us. The penalty of sin is no longer accounted against us. God's wrath concerning sin passes over us because we are covered by the blood of Jesus. We are forgiven because of His Name. How does His Name forgive us? **Philippians 2:8-11**. His Name is who He IS. He is the Word, He is the Christ, He is our Savior, He is the Righteous One, He is the Propitiation, He is the Resurrection and the Eternal Life, He is the Way the Truth and the Life, He is the I AM. He is the I AM that I AM. It is because of His Name that our sins are forgiven and expelled away from us.

So that's the introduction to all his little children in verse 12, now in verse 13, John gives the hope and assurance of having Fellowship with God.

¹³ I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.

¹³ γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one.

γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.

γράφω ὑμῖν, παιδιά, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα.

We will look at verse 13 in three sections:

¹³ I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.

¹³ γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

Or, we can read it...

I am writing (present tense) *to you fathers, because you have come to know that which is from the beginning.*

Now relate this to what we learned in 1:1 and 2:7 to know who was from the beginning, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς? It is Jesus Christ, the Logos, that was made flesh and proclaimed the command of Everlasting Life from the Father. This knowing Jesus who was from the beginning, is not only for fathers, its for everyone who believes. It's just a way to show the wide range of this assurance to all who believe, both young and old alike.

John continues verse 13... *I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one.*

γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

“*overcome*” is the word *nikao, νικάω*, to conquer, to have victory. John dominates this word in the New Testament. He uses it 24 out of the 28 times in the NT. In this verse, John is giving believers the encouragement that they have overcome, conquered, and gained the victory over *ton poneron, τὸν πονηρόν*, that which is evil. Not just the “evil one”, but all that is evil.

Notice how John uses this word in other places of his letter.

1 John 4:3–4-³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. ⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

It is the spirit of antichrist that we have overcome. And notice in this verse John says the little children have overcome them, confirming that it is not just young men who overcome the evil, but all believers in Christ. He says the same thing in 1 John 5:4-5...

1 John 5:4–5-⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

John 16:33- *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

Overcoming the evil in this world doesn't mean you will never have persecution or tribulation, in fact Paul says, "*all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*", 2 Tim 3:12. Overcoming evil is apprehending everlasting life in Christ Jesus and living with Him forever, **1 John 2:15-17**. The way we overcome the world is we do not love the world or the things in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life... but we love God and pledge our allegiance to God and not the world. And the one who does this will abide unto the forever.

In verse 13, John reiterates himself to the little children as a whole just as he did in verse 12,

¹³ ...I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

¹³ γράφω ὑμῖν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα.

But this time he doesn't say, *teknion, τεκνίον*, he says, *paidion, παιδίον*. These are all the same believers as I have mentioned, but to add clarity to his writing, he is specifically speaking to the loving relationship a child has with his father by using the word *paidion, παιδίον*, "*you have known the Father*". It doesn't matter what stage of spiritual maturity you are in, from day 1 of justification, we know our Father. We cry out, "abba Father", daddy, as Paul tells us in Romans 8:15.

John uses this word, "little child", *paidion, παιδίον*, twice in his epistle, both times addressing the loving relationship a child has with his father. John specifically uses this word in our text today, 2:13, and in verse 2:18-23 in reference to knowing and having a loving relationship with the Father, in which He trains and instructs His children. This word, *paidion, παιδίον*, is the root of *paideia, παιδεία*, which is the loving hand of training and instruction that a father gives his child, we see this demonstrated in Hebrews 12:5-11. And that is what John is doing here in this letter. He is instructing his children in the way of sanctification because sanctification and *paideia, παιδεία*, go hand in hand.

So far in these two verses, 12-13, John has written *grapho hoomeen, γράφω ὑμῖν*, present tense, "*I am writing to you...*" 4 times. Now in verse 14 John circles around repeating almost the exact same thing but deepens his meaning. Lets read this verse again..

¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* 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 wicked one.

¹⁴ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροί ἐστε, καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει,
καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

Notice this time, John says, "*I have written to you*", *ἔγραψα ὑμῖν*, aorist indicative, past tense... and he does this specifically addressing the young men and fathers, but as I said, this is a metaphor saying to all; the young and old alike, to all my "little children". But it is curious why he would change his tense from present, I am writing... to past tense, I have written... Scholars have many different reasons, and there is no clear answer why, but I have a theory. The first time he writes this, it is building confidence and giving encouragement. I am writing, present tense, because... this is what you have done, and you are doing well... Now the second time, John writes in an aorist, because this could be what is called an epistolary aorist. Meaning he is writing from the perspective of the reader and not his present perspective. He is saying, when you are reading this over and over again, after I have written this to you, meditating on the words I am giving you, ... keep doing what you have been doing... continue to have confidence in this assurance of knowing Him. Keep on overcoming, keep on being strong, keep the Word of God abiding in you. I think that's the idea of this change in tense.

When John repeats himself, saying, “you have overcome that which is evil”, this second time, John gives us the reason why we have overcome the evil one... Because you are strong... He says, “I have written to you young men because you are strong...” this word “strong” is *ischuros*, *ισχυρός*, mighty, robust, fortified, powerful, full of power, energized. This is the result of being empowered by the *dunamis* of God. *Dunamis* is the source of power, and the *ischuros*, *ισχυρός*, is the result of being filled up with this power.

And John goes on in verse 14 and gives us another reason why we are overcomers. He says... *because the Word of God abides in you...* This is *ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*. This is more than the words on the page of the Bible. This is the power behind these words. This is the source of Everlasting Life and when this Life abides in you, this is how we are empowered with His *dunamis*. We are made full of power, *ischuros*, *ισχυρός*, because the Logos of Life abides in us. The command of Everlasting Life abides in you. This is the power of resurrection life abiding in us. This is how you overcome that which is evil... he says, “I have written this to you because you have overcome that which is evil”.

In verse 14, John is saying, “As you read this epistle that I have written to you, continue to know the Logos that was from the beginning, and being fully assured of your Fellowship in Him. Continue to stand strong and be empowered with the Word of God. In doing so, His Word will continue to abide in you, and you will continue to overcome the evil in this world.”

John is writing this section to pause, to take a breath and be assured of our eternal life in Jesus. John gives us this encouragement to continue to stand strong in the Word, to continue to persevere and endure because the Word of God abides in us, and to continue to overcome the evil and wicked things of the world through believing in the Word.

We have the victory of Everlasting Life in Him because we have overcome that which is evil. This is the assurance John wants us to have as we walk as children of the Light among a dark and fallen world.

Revelation 12:11- *And they overcame him (the evil one) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives even to the death.*

❖ **This is how we overcome** ❖

By the blood of Jesus and standing on the Truth of His Word,
 having the confidence and the hope of Everlasting Life
 and knowing that we know Him and that we
 are abiding in Him.