

In today's passage, John has a powerful, three-fold message of confidence for all Christian believers.

1. You are forgiven!
2. You know God who has been from the beginning!
3. You have overcome the evil one!

Now if we can wrap our heads and hearts around these powerful affirmations of who we are, this will bring us great confidence in our faith!

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

First, note that this passage comes across as an interlude between what has been and what will be. Some have thought that it is out of place in the flow of thought. But rather, I see it as John pausing to reinforce who we are as believers in Christ. To this point, he has had an upbeat, positive message of God being Light, we having our sin and sins taken care of through Christ's provision, and a challenge to obey, abide and love. Immediately following, he will give us sobering warnings of dangers to avoid. But here, he wants us to reflect on three amazing things we are in Christ to give us confidence:

1. You are forgiven!
2. You know God who has been from the beginning!
3. You have overcome the evil one!

Secondly, note that this passage is written in cadence, that come across as poetry, or lyrics to a song, or a familiar creed of faith. There is repetition of thought that is curious (“I am writing to you” and “I have written to you”). And it seems to be directed to only three different groups of people (children, fathers and young men), leaving us wonder if the rest of us are excluded. We might be tempted to analyze its structure, assigning special message to each of the three groups. But let us be cautious, for poetic thought is not meant to be analyzed in literal detail, but rather pondered and received for its overall meaning to all. And here, John wants we who are followers of Christ to know with confidence:

1. You are forgiven!
2. You know God who has been from the beginning!
3. You have overcome the evil one!

Thirdly, note that there are at two important clues that this passage is intended for all, and not just children, fathers and young men.

1. When John begins “I am writing to you, little children,” his Greek word for “little children” is “teknia” – literally “little born ones.” Or as the Scottish like to say, “little bairns.” This is the same word that John uses throughout this letter for an elderly patriarch such as himself to refer to all believers. In 2:1 he uses the same word – “my little children.” We see it again in 2:28, 3:7, 4:4 and 5:21. In all these passages, John is addressing the whole of believers, not just children. And when he writes in

2:13 to "children," a different Greek word is used – "paidia" – which indeed refers to a person young in age and experience.

2. Clearly it is not just children who have been forgiven. Nor is it only young men who have overcome the evil one, or fathers (whether referring to mature men or actual fathers) who have known God who is from the beginning. These are precious and powerful possessions of all believers in Christ. So both these reasons argue for this passage applying to all those born-again.

Now I can see that young children ("paidia"), referred to at the end of verse 13, might simply be aware of their faith as "knowing the Father" – that is, a simple child-like faith in a loving deity. And I can see that "young men" in the strength of their life, experiencing many spiritual attacks from within and without, would derive special comfort and encouragement from knowing that Christ has helped them overcome the evil one. And likewise I can see that the more mature men or "fathers" of faith would have come to "know Him who has been from the beginning" in a deeper sense than those younger. So there is some specific application that can be found in these age divisions. But I believe, above all, God wants all believers to know this, with confidence:

1. You are forgiven!
2. You know God who has been from the beginning!
3. You have overcome the evil one!

## **I AM FORGIVEN**

In a far more universal sense, all believers, men and women, are like little children, for all have an innocence brought about by the forgiveness of sin. And we see from verse 12, that we have been forgiven "for His name's sake." This is referring to Jesus, our Advocate and the propitiation for our sins to the Heavenly Father. And His name, as we know, is "Jesus," which means He is the Savior. Remember that the angel said to Joseph in his dream that the child born of Mary should be called "Jesus" because He would "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). So it is through and by the very name of Jesus that you are forgiven. This forgiveness was accomplished on the cross of Calvary when Jesus took your sin and sins upon Himself and because your substitute as sacrifice. And it was God the Father who authorized this substitution.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

And we can appropriate this sacrificial provision when we receive Jesus as our Savior.

**John 1:12** *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

Paul declared our marvelous forgiveness in this way:

***Ephesians 1:7-8a*** *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.*

And King David the Psalmist expressed our forgiveness in these poetic terms:

***Psalms 103:12*** *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

"Little children" of God – you are forgiven! This is who you are. And in this you can revel and be guilt-free knowing "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) You can have absolute confidence in your cleansing. And remember that John has already taught us, that as we commit sins in our Christian walk, which we are sure to do until we are made without sin in heaven:

***1 John 1:9*** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Christian, say it together with confidence: **"I am forgiven."**

## **I KNOW MY HEAVENLY FATHER**

Three times in our passage we see this, both as children of the Father and as fathers representing the Father. In verse 13 we read, "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning." And later in that same verse we read, "I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." And in verse 14 we have, "I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning."

Think of it. Christian, you KNOW He who has been from the beginning. You KNOW the One who made every star you see in the sky at night. You KNOW the creator of every animate and inanimate object on the face of the earth. You can talk with Him, reason with Him, even argue with Him. And you KNOW his heart though the Scripture He has written to you. And you KNOW his character through the character of His Son, Jesus, revealed in those Scriptures. This is something of which the non-Christian has no knowledge whatsoever. He has no concept of what it is to KNOW the God of the universe and have sweet fellowship through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The word for "know" is the same word used for sexual union between husband and wife – the most intimate of fellowship. Our intimacy with God is of a nature of which we have only begun to plumb the depths, and which will grow and grow throughout eternity. Oh dearly beloved of God, say it confidently with me: **"I know God, who has been from the beginning."**

## **I HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE**

Twice in our passage we see this, both times referring to the "young men." In verse 13: "you have overcome the evil one." And in verse 14 we read it again, but this time get a strong indication of how this overcoming is accomplished.

In Verse 14 we read, "because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you." I see this a two-pronged answer to how it is that we can overcome the evil one.

1. God looks for each of his children to be "strong" – not strong in our self, but strong in our commitment and trust in Him. We must ever realize that we are in a battle. Yes, the battle belongs to the Lord, but we must stand up in resistance to temptation – choosing the right and rejecting the wrong. In the hardest times we must cling the tightest and strongest to His mighty hand and shelter ourselves under His "wing" of protection.

2. In Ephesians 6, Paul teaches us of the armor of God. But the only offensive weapon is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." John is telling us that our ability to overcome the evil one is largely based on our flexing of that offensive weapon of the Word of God. We must know it, trust it and apply it. Remember we sin less when we hide and treasure that Word in our heart. (Psalm 119:11) And "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) You may sometimes feel like the evil one and his demons are winning battles, but you must know and be confident that God is winning the war, and therefore you are winning the war. You are overcoming.

**1 Corinthians 15:57** *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So say it confidently with me: **"I have overcome the evil one."**

This is yet another important reason why John has written this little book of First John. And he takes this interlude in his presentation to give us confidence in who we are. You are forgiven. You know God who has been from the beginning. And you have overcome the evil one.

Let's say it together one last time, with confidence, and humble gratefulness:

- 1. I am forgiven!**
- 2. I know God who has been from the beginning!**
- 3. I have overcome the evil one!**

Now let's be sure and act like we believe it! The daily battle rages, but

1. We are forgiven!
2. We know God who has been from the beginning!
3. We have overcome the evil one!