

# Children, Fathers, Young Men

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## Text:

I John 2: 12-17

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning.

I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

I write (have written) unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

## Introduction:

This passage:

- Is a transition to the third condition of walking in the light: We must reject the world
- Is different in style (almost poetic) from the rest of the book, yet deals with the same themes ( "that which is from the beginning", forgiveness of sins, knowing God, the abiding word.
- Raises a number of questions: (1) Why does John say I am writing, then I have written? (2) Who is represented by children, fathers, and young men?
- Is written to affirm the validity of the spiritual experience of those to who John is writing as opposed to those who are making false claims.

## I. Children

- Children or “dear children” along with beloved is one of John’s preferred ways of addressing the entire group to who he is writing.
- All believers are God’s children
- The two characteristics of God’s children are: (1) Their sins are forgiven through the name of Christ, (2) They have come to know the Father.
- We are all children and we never cease to be children, but as children we progress

## II. Fathers

- In the repeated lines about fathers nothing changes. In both cases they are described as those who have come to know him who is from the beginning
- This is a reference to the incarnate living Christ. 1:1, cf. John 1:1ff
- They are those who by experience have come to an unwavering knowledge of Jesus Christ. Those who have walked with him in good times and bad and who have come to know that “the truth is in Jesus” and are thus not “carried away by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4)

## III. Young Men

- It is here that John introduces a new theme: overcoming the wicked one that will be taken up again later in the book
- This will make the transition to the next passage about rejecting the world
- In the first instance he simply says that they have overcome the wicked one, but in the second he tells us how they have overcome –“because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”
  - **This is in contrast to those who are making false claims: “1Jn 1:8-10** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. **1Jn 2:3-6** And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.
  - **This is based on the teaching of Jesus in John 15**

## Conclusion:

Two Important Questions:

- What is implied in overcoming?
- How does God's Word abide?

Overcoming the evil one requires:

- Insight and understanding – The devil is a liar, a deceiver
- Power

This insight and power come from the Word of Christ that abides in us. How does this take place?

- Knowledge
- Action
- Experience