

# 1 John

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## 1 John 2:12-14

These three verses almost sound like poetry. There is a rhythm to each line that simply flows. There is also a shift in verb tense. John goes from “I am writing” to “I have written”. This is also a common technique with Greek writers who shift from being the writer to being the reader. He can rightly say “I am writing” but by the time the letter reaches the reader he will “have written.” And in all of this is the unmistakable aroma of love: the love of a writer to a reader, but mostly the love of a father to his children.

### Verse 12

- “Little children” is John’s favorite term for the people of his churches. He began this chapter with it and uses it four more times after here. Because he addresses himself to little children, young men, and fathers we are tempted to think he is writing to three different age groups, but this would be the case only in loosest of terms. So as John is writing to “Little children” we are to understand that he is speaking to the whole church, to me and you.
- The Good News is that our sins have been forgiven. This is the essential message of the gospel. When Jesus sent out the disciples just before His ascension in Luke 24, the Risen Christ instructed them to go out and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. This was a key piece of Paul’s preaching (Acts 13:38). Christ’s atoning work on the cross assured forgiveness for our sins. Isaiah 53:5-6 points to this as being the essential work of the Messiah. This is a central theme in the book of Hebrews (2:17; 7:27).
- John says that we have been forgiven “for His name’s sake” or “through His name”. To the Jews, the name was more than just what you were called by.

Your name speaks to the whole of your person. In Mark 5 when Jesus encounters the Gerasene Demoniac, Jesus asks the name of demoniac in order to discover who he truly was and the response was telling: "My name is Legion, for we are many". Now Jesus knew who He was dealing with, who and what this person really was. You see the same in Psalms 9:10 – "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You". We put our trust in God not merely because we know His name is Yahweh, but because we know *HIM*, who and what He is. In Psalms 23, we are guided by God in the paths of righteousness "for His name's sake" just as here in 1 John our sins are forgiven "for His name's sake". The whole theme of Psalms 23 is that God IS the Good Shepherd, this is His nature, and as such it is His nature to guide we who are his sheep in the paths He chooses for us, the paths of righteousness. So too here, in 1 John, God's whole purpose in the mission of atonement He gave to His only Son is the forgiveness of our sins. This is God's desire, His purpose in reaching out to us when He sent His only Son.

#### Verse 13

- Fathers: Again, the term only loosely refers to age or maturity. All Christians can "know Him who has been from the beginning". Such knowledge is not reserved for those with silver hair. I have known many young people whose spiritual maturity was far greater than most of the adults in the church. And often the reverse is true. Many times I have been so very frustrated when older people who hold positions of authority in a church lack even the slightest evidence of spiritual maturity. Often when a pastor is looking for someone to really get something done, a mission project or starting a new initiative, it is more often than not, a young person who takes up the challenge.
- Young men: Thankfully, overcoming "the evil one", overcoming temptation, is NOT restricted to younger people only. Older people have just as many temptations as younger people. So again, let us not get locked up in John's rather poetic was of addressing the whole church. By God's grace we are all able to overcome "the evil one". And note John does not simply say "evil"

but “THE evil ONE”. All of us must fight with the strength of young men against the adversary and his power.

- Children: You know the Father. Again, while Jesus was very strong on the value and simplicity of the faith of children, a person of any age can come to know the Father.
- In summation: here all Christians need to have the wisdom of Fathers, the strength of young men, and the faith of children.

#### Verse 14

- John uses this verse to restate his points and to drive them home, but here he only addresses the Fathers and Young Men. Fathers, he repeats, have known Him who was from the beginning, but Young Men are strong because “the Word of God abides in you.” This is where our strength comes from. In John’s gospel, Jesus rebukes His critics because the Word of God did NOT abide in them (5:38; 8:37). In Ephesians 6, the only offensive weapon of a Christian warrior is his “sword”, that is the word of God.
- And it is this source of strength, the word of God abiding in us, that gives us the power to defeat the evil one. On our own, Satan will sift us like wheat. Robert Lewis Stevenson was once speaking to a group and asked if anyone knew the Caledonian Railway Station in Edinburgh. He asked because he said that “Once I met Satan there”. Many are quick to dismiss such comments, but Stevenson was deadly serious. A contemporary of his, Charles Baudelaire, once wrote that, “The greatest trick the devil ever played was convincing the world he did not exist”. Scripture is clear. Satan most certainly exists and we MUST have the Word of God in us to overcome him.