

# A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

## 1 John 2:12-14

### INTRODUCTION

A Mythical Story – It was announced the devil was going to offer all tools for sale. On the night of the sale, the tools were all attractively displayed: Malice, Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Sensuality, Deceit and all the other implements of evil were spread out, each marked with its price.

Apart from the rest lay a much worn out harmless looking wedge-shaped tool, priced much higher than any of the others. Someone asked the devil what it was.

“This is **Discouragement**,” was the reply.

“Why do you have it priced so high?”

“Because,” replied Satan, “it is more useful to me than any of the others. I can pry open and get inside a man’s consciousness with **Discouragement** when I could not get near him with any of the other tools. Once inside, I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It is so worn out because I use it with nearly everybody. Very few people, you see, know it belongs to me.”

The Mythical Story finishes – the devil’s price for Discouragement was so high, it never sold. And he is still using it.

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Turn to the book of 1 John → John the ‘black and white’ apostle, the Son of Thunder. John makes as forceful a call to examine one’s profession of salvation for genuineness as any other biblical writer - maybe even more than Paul or James.

But in the case of our text this morning, John recognizes gray. And he pauses to give assurance.



blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

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

**Jer 31:34** – “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

→ Released, Delivered, Forgiven

→ Assurance!

→ Confidence!

Now, someone will say, “I am not worthy to be forgiven.”  
You are correct. And God knows this.

→ He does not forgive because we are worthy. Our merciful Lord forgives → “**for His name’s sake**” – this is God’s ultimate purpose.

Same purpose as → **Psa 23:3** – “He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”

**Rom 1:5** – “through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake,”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Group**, ...which is one of two different groups among all believers he will address:

## **II. The More Mature 1 John 2:13a**

Point – John wants to encourage and give confidence and assurance to the mature believers to whom he is writing.

Proof – “<sup>13a</sup>**I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.**”

“<sup>a</sup>**I am writing to you, fathers**” – the more mature in the faith

**“because you know Him”** → Fellowship with God is the true end of man’s existence – **2:3** – “by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

**Illustration** – You know the dynamic of gaining entrance or privilege because you know someone? Well, I remember when I was getting my undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at Oregon State, I had an Arabic fellow student friend. I told him I was going to be driving down to see my Margie and take her to San Francisco. I remember he said, “Go to such and such a restaurant and tell them you are a friend of Prince...” I forget his name ... “Prince Ali” maybe. My point is this → saying that I was a friend of this VIP would gain me favor and entrance into this restaurant.

**Application** – John says you know Him: **“who has been from the beginning”** – 8 times in the first 3 chapters of 1 John  
→ **1 John 1:1**

Even before the beginning, there was the presence of God.  
There was also: love, communication, and a plan.

There was purpose and a promise.  
There was thought, will, and decree.  
There was election. There was a Book of Life.  
There was a gift. And there was grace.

**Isa 43:13** – “Even from eternity I am He”

**Psa 90:2** – “Before the mountains were born, or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God”

**Job 36:26** – “Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; The number of His years is unsearchable”

**Application** – Francis Schaeffer wrote in *Genesis in Space and Time* – “If we are being fully scriptural, we do not praise [God] first because He saved us, but first because He is there and has always been there.”

→ And you know Him!!!

**3<sup>rd</sup> Group**, ...second group of all believers

**III. The Less Mature**                      **1 John 2:13b**

Point – John wants to encourage, give confidence and assurance to the less mature believers who are in the midst of the battle.

Proof – “<sup>13b</sup>**I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.**”

- age time is a factor
- God uses the term “elder” for a reason
- but that is not the only or primary factor

**Illustration** – I sometimes use the following expression - “Nine women can’t deliver a baby in one month” ☺ – in the corporate world, to help people understand no amount of effort or increased numbers of people can expedite a process (e.g., developing and delivering a software bug fix or enhancement).

However!! In the spiritual realm, there can be exponential growth. ...

**Illustration** – In Job, **Eliphaz**, **Bildad**, and **Jophar** were slow to hear and quick to speak. They all spoke from their ignorance. But then **Elihu** arrives on the scene and speaks in chapters **32-37** → turn to **Job 32:6-10** - although a younger man, he speaks wisely

Speaking to the young men

“**because you have overcome the evil one**” – be victorious, win, defeat, conquer - a past accomplished event but with continuing results

This Greek word for overcome → is another of John’s favorite words

- We see it 3 times in Septuagint, it is used by Luke once, Paul uses it 3 times
- John uses it 24 times including **1 John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5**

**Rev 3:5** – “He who overcomes ... I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

**Rev 21:7** – “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

When approaching the Bible, we know we do not ask the question, “What does this mean to me?” The real question is, “What does this mean?” This passage one of those passages, not where we ask, “What does this mean to me?”

→ But we ask, “Which group am I in?”

**Illustration** - Like **Eph 5:22-6:9** there are different groups identified although it is all profitable to all – “Wives ... Husbands ... Children ... Fathers ... Slaves ... Masters ...”

**Application** – Which group are you in?

There is a fourth group, unmentioned in this text ... of unbelievers. That is where the gospel message comes in.

John now repeats.

Proof –

“<sup>13c</sup>**I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.** <sup>14</sup>**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.**”

**Illustration** – A little girl had been naughty in school. For punishment, she was directed by the teacher to remain in her seat after class until she had written a story with at least fifty words.

The little girl returned to the teacher in a surprisingly short amount of time and presented the following story:

“I lost my cat. So I went out and called, ‘Here, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty ... [10 more times].’”

The teacher excused the girl, impressed with her cleverness.

→ John likes to repeat himself. But he is not just filling space

**1<sup>st</sup> Group ...**

**I. All the Believers**

Point – “<sup>13c</sup>**I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.**”

**1 John 2:18** → the context is very clear that John is talking to all the believers!

Point → You all are forgiven and you all know the Father!

**2<sup>nd</sup> Group ...**

**II. The More Mature**

Point – In case we missed it the first time ... ☺

Proof – “<sup>14a</sup>**I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.**”

Since the beginning, everything which has come to pass is only the revealing of God’s mind. It is that which He, from all eternity past, purposed or decreed to come to pass.

The history and destiny of all things animate or inanimate were all decreed beforehand by God. Everything, whether it is the establishment of a nation, its culture, its language, people, population, its location on the earth, its destruction, were all decreed by God.

War, birth, death, troubles, seasons, weather, to the smallest detail and without exception were infallibly determined beforehand by God to come to pass.

Nothing whatever exists or happens but that which God has decreed before the foundation of the world.

God's eternal plan of redemption began in eternity past. Before time, before creation, before anybody existed. In the free and independent and sovereign **will** of God, He set His plan in motion.

**Illustration** – We are not some debris and driftwood floating in a big river of time. God is not up in heaven with a divine fishing hook hoping to catch one or two of us now and then.

**Geerhardus Vos**, early 20<sup>th</sup> century professor at Princeton alongside Machen and Warfield said this – “The best proof that He will never cease to love us lies in [the fact] that He never began [to love us].” God always loved you even before the beginning...and you know Him.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Group ...**

**III. The Less Mature**

What John does at the end of text, John adds two elements: he talks about the vitality of this group and the vitamin that gets them strong.

Point – What makes you physically strong? Diet and exercise.

Proof – “<sup>14b</sup>**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.**”

Your **spiritual strength** is not mystical, sentimental, emotional, or psychological.

Your **spiritual strength** is related to: time, knowledge, activity, and effort ... in a linear fashion.

Your **spiritual strength** is related to your diet and exercise in an exponential fashion.

The **diet** is the Word of God.

“**and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.**” – remain, stay, live, dwell, continue, last, persist.  
– favorite word of John

This is the key. Psa 119:9, 11

The **exercise** is the overcoming.

**Illustration** – Now, dead people can't fight. Only living people can fight. Only living and strong people can fight well!

A soldier will fight to the death, even when he is the last one standing. Why? For Honor.

**Application** – **Vindication, Vigilance, and Victory**

## CONCLUSION

**Illustration** – Consider a letter a mother wrote to her daughter at college when there was an outbreak of smallpox on campus.

*I ask not that God give you wealth,  
But daily beg him for your health.*

on the back of the card,

*Dear Ruth,*

*I'm not writing you out of distress because I think you are among the victims of the smallpox outbreak. On the contrary I am rejoicing you are well!*

*Of course, I don't want you to get sick. Take the necessary precautions. I write because my heart is full of memories and confidence. I recall how you once had measles—and how you got completely well!*

*I remember how you were so brave back when the small pox vaccinations were still given in our little town with a piece of broken glass. You took it without a tear, and now you've got that protection in your body.*

*You've been so strong and healthy! It seems, as I look back, that when everybody else was falling with the flu, you conquered the enemy and hardly got the sniffles.*

*So hold on to what you've got. Take heart in the manifest work of God in your life. Keep yourself in his wonderful health.*

*I am full of joy in the gift of health we share.  
Love, Mom*

Beloved, that is a great picture of what John does in this letter to you and to me. He wants us to have that vigilance so that we stay healthy but, even more to the point, he wants us to have confidence and assurance that will motivate that vigilance.