

## The Path to Spiritual Victory # 5

1 John 2: 12-17

The love and concern John has for the church is evident as we continue to read this epistle. He began by exalting Christ, reminding the believer of whom they have believed. He offered a challenge regarding our fellowship with the Lord and shared the comfort of knowing we have an Advocate when we sin and come short. Our last study dealt with the believer's love for the Scripture and others. Each thought is practical in application, but also essential in our lives.

John continues to exhort and guide the church in our text today. We find guidance and instruction concerning a victorious spiritual life. He speaks to a broad audience, but the approach is essentially the same. Many in John's day faced adversity and suffered defeat. The same is true for us as well. Life is difficult at best. We all face seasons of difficulty, times when our faith is tried and we feel discouraged or defeated. Many struggle with spiritual victory.

Let's move into our text verses and examine the [directions](#) John offers as we consider: [The Path to Spiritual Victory](#).

**I. The Importance of a Relationship (12-13)** – Here John addresses all believers directly. As he speaks to three specific groups, he covers each phase of our spiritual journey. All believers fit into one of the categories mentioned. Although they differ in many ways, they all share a personal relationship with Christ. The first relationship mentioned is that of:

**A. The Children (12-13c)** – [I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.](#) <sup>[13c]</sup> [I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.](#) This speaks of those who are babes in Christ, yet to reach spiritual maturity. We know they are born again by the reference to their sins being forgiven and knowing the Father. They have not yet reached maturity, but they belong to Christ. There is much to learn, and a great need for growth, but the potential is there. They have reached the first step toward maturity in Christ and spiritual victory.

**B. The Fathers (13a)** – [I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him \*that is\* from the beginning.](#) John also addresses the wise and spiritually mature. This level of maturity is reached at different times, depending on many variables, but it is safe to say these are not new converts. These have known Christ in salvation for some time. They have spent time with Him, reading His Word, serving in ministry, praying, all in continued fellowship with the Lord.

**C. The Young Men** (13b) – I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

Now John speaks to those who are midway through the spiritual journey. He describes them as young men. This refers to those who have been saved for a while and are growing significantly in the Lord. They may not have reached absolute maturity, but they have endured some battles along the way and have come through them victorious. They possess a hunger and zeal for the Lord. They are strong, ambitious, eager, and committed.

**II. The Importance of our Remembrance** (14) – 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. Our relationship with Christ is essential and foundational, but to experience spiritual victory there has to be more than a mere relationship. Being part of the family of God also bears responsibilities. John challenges us to remember our relationship and the obligations associated with it. Notice:

**A. The Emphasis** (14) – As we read the text did it appear to you that John had repeated himself here? A quick reading of the text would miss an important aspect he intended to convey. Verses 12-13 were given in present tense. This verse reveals past tense; **I have written...** This is not the first time John has shared these thoughts with the mature and those who are rapidly growing in Christ. He doesn't mention the little children because they have yet to advance spiritually.

- John is emphasizing continued spiritual growth. These have reached a level beyond childhood. They are no longer babes in Christ. That is to be commended, but it also must be guarded. There is no place for complacency in our spiritual lives. Regardless of where we are with the Lord, there is always room for improvement!

**B. The Exhortation** (14) – John is basically reminding them of the same exhortation he gave in the past. Things have not changed. The struggles of life will continue. The need for a closer walk with the Lord and advanced wisdom will remain. The enemy will not leave them alone simply because they have reached a certain level in their spiritual lives. They must continue to hunger after the Lord and study His Word.

- What a challenge that presents to us as well. It is easy to get complacent as we walk with the Lord. Most of us have been in Sunday school all our lives. We have heard the Bible stories. We know the doctrines of Scripture. We are familiar with the tactics of the enemy and the struggles of life. We have been through storms and came through them safely. We are maturing in Christ, but we must not be satisfied with where we are. There is much more to accomplish, greater heights to reach, and victories to win. Stay true to the Lord and continue to grow in Him!

**III. The Importance of our Resolve (15-17)** – In our closing verses John deals with the resolve every believer ought to possess. We must desire the Lord above all else. We cannot allow the desires or hindrances of life to keep us from following the Lord. We will never achieve spiritual victory apart from a consistent, continual walk with the Lord. Consider:

**A. The Caution (15a)** – *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* John well understood the continual struggle we face while living in a body of flesh. The world and all it offers appeals to the flesh. As believers we must rise above those desires, seeking the ways of God instead of the things of the world. *Col.3:2 – Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

**B. The Confirmation (15b)** – *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* John speaks boldly, but his words are necessary. Many today will not embrace such thinking, but it is true nonetheless. We cannot love the world, continually seeking to please the flesh without any remorse or sensing the need to repent, and have the love of God within us. *Matt.6:24 – No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* *James 4:4 – Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

- We have discussed the fact that trees bear fruit after their kind. We are known by the fruit we bear. What we possess on the inside will eventually be revealed in the life we live. This mark serves as a good indicator of salvation. If a man's heart is continually on the world and all it offers, never considering the holiness of God or the sin he commits, the love of the Father is not in him. A Christian cannot live in sin and be comfortable. It may appeal to flesh, but within his heart he will be miserable. If one can love the world without thought or conviction, he needs salvation.

**C. The Corruption (16)** – *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.* Here we discover the utter corruption of the world. (John speaks of the world in reference to the world system, what it offers, its ideas and philosophies.) The world is full of sin and wickedness. If we love the world, that is what we love. We desire the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life but not the Father. Such desires are not of God, but of the world and the prince of darkness. Cohabitation with the world will leave your garment spotted.

- There is much in this one verse concerning sin. In essence every sin we commit against God can be placed in one of these three categories. These are the areas Satan tempted Jesus

with in the wilderness. I have already dealt extensively with the verses in a previous study and will not devote the time to deal with them individually. We must understand however, sin always defiles and corrupts. Any and all sin originates with the devil; they never come from God. A lost man will definitely be characterized by these attributes, but believers must guard against them as well. If Satan tempted Jesus with them, you can rest assured he will tempt us with them also. We must be close to the Lord if we are to overcome!

**D. The Culmination** (17) – *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* John offers a stirring challenge in this last directive concerning our spiritual victory. Those who seek to please the flesh are concerned with the here and now. They give little thought to the life to come. Their main desire is to please the flesh as much as they possibly can while in this life. We discover the danger and futility of such thinking. The world and all it offers will one day pass away; it will be destroyed with a consuming fire. The things men pursued and placed such emphasis on will not last.

- The believer has hope though. We are not dependent upon this world or anything it offers. Our hope and assurance is in Christ. Those who belong to Him will live forever with the Lord.
- All need to understand this powerful truth. Our lives will culminate in one of two places. All who ever lived will be judged of the Lord, just as He will judge the world, or be accepted of Him because of a relationship with Christ, with the guarantee of eternal life. We cannot have it both ways. All fall into one of two categories, saved or lost. Each category has eternal implications with vastly different surroundings.

**Conclusion:** John has covered quite a bit of ground in our text today. We must have a relationship with Christ if we are to enjoy spiritual victory over sin and possess eternal life. Every believer ought to continually grow and mature in the Lord. I fear that many in our modern culture never progress from the childhood stage. I pray that we will strive for maturity, seeking to know more of Christ, and desiring a closer walk with Him.

We cannot look at this passage and escape the reminder of the end times. The Lord is coming again for the redeemed and the lost will stand before Him in judgment. I pray you know the Lord as your personal Savior. If not, I urge you to respond as He leads. This ought to challenge the hearts of believers to share our faith with the world. Those who die apart from Christ will face eternal condemnation and judgment in hell.