

# 1 John 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

## Analysis

**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 unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.** John addresses three groups, likely representing stages of spiritual maturity though all believers possess these realities in varying degrees. "Fathers" (pateres) are spiritually mature believers characterized by deep, settled knowledge: "ye have known him that is from the beginning" (egnōkate ton ap' archēs). The perfect tense "have known" indicates past encounter with continuing experiential knowledge. "Him that is from the beginning" refers to Christ (cf. 1:1)—eternal, pre-existent, foundational. Mature believers are marked not by spectacular experiences but deep, personal knowledge of Christ accumulated through years of walking with Him.

"Young men" (neaniskoi) represent strength and active spiritual warfare: "ye have overcome the wicked one" (nenikēkate ton ponēron). The perfect tense "have overcome" (nenikēkate) indicates victory already won with continuing effect. "The wicked one" (ton ponēron) is Satan (cf. 3:12, 5:18-19). Young believers in vigor engage spiritual battle and experience victory through Christ's triumph (4:4). This isn't perfectionism (never falling) but positional victory (Satan's defeat is certain) empowering ongoing resistance.

"Little children" (paidia, different term than teknia in v.12) are newest believers: "ye have known the Father" (egnōkate ton patera). Even newest Christians possess foundational reality—knowledge of God as Father through adoption. This isn't deep mature knowledge (like fathers') but real relationship—knowing God personally as loving Father, not distant judge. All three groups possess reality (forgiveness, knowledge of Christ, victory, knowing the Father) in seed form that matures through growth.

## Historical Context

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The three-stage address reflects ancient pedagogical patterns. Jewish education distinguished children, young men, and elders. Greek philosophy recognized stages of learning—novices, advancing students, sages. Early Christian catechesis developed stages: inquirers, catechumens, baptized believers, mature teachers. Yet Christianity democratized spiritual privilege—even newest believers possess realities (forgiveness, sonship, victory) that pagan sages never attained.

John's emphasis on "having overcome the wicked one" provided crucial encouragement to believers facing deception from false teachers and possible persecution. Satan's defeat was accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection (John 12:31, Colossians 2:15). Believers participate in this victory through union with Christ. Against Gnostic claims that special knowledge was needed to overcome evil archons (spiritual rulers), John declares: young believers have already overcome through Christ.

The phrase "known the Father" was revolutionary. Judaism emphasized God's transcendence—knowing God intimately as Father was rare. Jesus taught disciples to pray "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9). Paul proclaimed believers receive Spirit of adoption crying "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). This intimate knowledge of God as loving Father, accessible to newest believers, surpassed anything available in Judaism or paganism.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. Which stage of spiritual maturity (little children, young men, fathers) best describes your current experience and what characterizes each?
2. How does knowing you've already overcome the wicked one through Christ change your approach to spiritual warfare and temptation?
3. What would it look like to grow from knowing the Father (initial relationship) to knowing Him who is from the beginning (deep, mature knowledge)?

## Interlinear Text

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γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρα ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ'  
**I write** **unto you** **fathers** **because** **ye have known** G3588 **him that is from**  
G1125 G5213 G3962 G3754 G1097 G575

ἀρχῆς γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι ὅτι νενικήκατε  
**the beginning** **I write** **unto you** **young men** **because** **ye have overcome**  
G746 G1125 G5213 G3495 G3754 G3528

τὸν πονηρόν γράφω ὑμῖν, παιδιά ὅτι ἐγνώκατε  
G3588 **the wicked one** **I write** **unto you** **little children** **because** **ye have known**  
G4190 G1125 G5213 G3813 G3754 G1097

τὸν πατέρα  
G3588 **fathers**  
G3962

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 14:7** (Parallel theme): If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

**1 John 2:14** (Evil): 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.

**1 John 1:1** (Parallel theme): That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

**1 John 4:4** (Parallel theme): Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

**Luke 10:22** (Parallel theme): All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

**1 John 5:18** (Evil): We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

**1 John 3:12** (Evil): Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

**Matthew 11:27** (Parallel theme): All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

**John 17:3** (Parallel theme): And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

**Proverbs 20:29** (Parallel theme): The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.