

“A True Believer Overcomes the Evil One”
(1 John 2:12-14)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. John tells us that it is possible to know that we are Christians.
 - a. “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).
 - b. There must be something that sets Christians apart from unbelievers or such a statement would not be possible.
 - c. John tells us what these things are.

2. How we can use this information:
 - a. It helps us to know whether we’re saved.
 - (i) If not settled, can paralyze us.
 - (ii) If settled can give us great confidence.

 - b. But it also gives us direction:
 - (i) It helps us see why God gave it; what He’s aiming at.
 - (ii) We can then cooperate with that grace to promote it.

B. Review.

1. What have we seen to this point? The believer’s experience is quite different than the unbeliever in the following areas:
 - a. First, with regard to his relationship with God:
 - (i) The unbeliever does not love or trust God, does not love the Lord Jesus, even denies Him; he is void of the Holy Spirit (which is his problem; remember, this is what we were like).
 - (ii) The grace of God changes this, giving the believer love for the three persons of the Godhead; the desire to confess Jesus as the Messiah, *as God come in human flesh*; because he has the Spirit, who gives him the ability to do all these things.

 - b. Second, with regard to the Word:
 - (i) The unbeliever does not listen to God’s Word, does not remember it and allow it to change his heart and direction, but walks in darkness (according to what is false), practices sin, denies that he does and does not seek to change.
 - (ii) The believer, on the other hand, listens to those sent from God, allows the truth to abide in him, walks in that light/keeps the commandments, confesses his sins and seeks to be purified from all of them.

 - c. And third, with regard to the brethren:

- (i) The unbeliever does not love the brethren, because they are being conformed to the image of One they don't love: Christ.
 - (ii) But the believer loves them for the same reason.
- d. So far, we've seen that believers and unbelievers are polar opposites, which shouldn't surprise us since they are in two different kingdoms.
2. This evening, we'll look at the fact the true believer overcomes the evil one, while the unbeliever remains in his power.
- a. We'll consider, first, what it means to overcome the evil one.
 - b. Second, how the believer overcomes the evil one.
 - c. Finally, how the unbeliever's experience with the evil one is quite different.

II. Sermon.

A. What does it mean to overcome the evil one?

- 1. What it doesn't mean.
 - a. It obviously doesn't mean that we destroy him or render him helpless.
 - b. This is something Jesus will do when He returns:
- 2. What it does mean.
 - a. It means we will thwart his plans in our lives, to destroy us, to run us into sin, to tempt us off the path.
 - b. This will give us the necessary strength to overcome him to some degree in the world.

B. How does the believer overcome the evil one?

- 1. We should be able to deduce this from what we've already seen:
 - a. The believer possesses the Spirit:
 - (i) Who gives the believer a love for God, for those made in His image, and for His Word.
 - (ii) They have the desire to obey God in everything He commands, to turn from every sin, to be cleansed from every desire for evil.
 - (iii) Now if this is in his heart, and this is what he does, how can he not at the same time, as he matures in his love and obedience, overcome the evil one?
 - b. What is the devil's power over us in the first place?
 - (i) It's sin, indwelling sin, his internal ally: If we overcome this sin through the power of God's Spirit, we overcome the devil's main advantage.
 - (ii) John writes, "I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome (νενικήκατε) the evil one" (2:13b).
 - (iii) Of course, John does not mean to say that this applies only to men.
 - (iv) When we gain a measure of maturity in our sanctification, we also gain some measure of victory over our adversary.

2. How do we gain this maturity to gain this victory?
 - a. John writes in verse 14b, “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.”
 - (i) It’s not entirely clear on the surface, but it shouldn’t be too hard to figure it out.
 - (ii) Our strength comes from the Word dwelling in us, that gives us power through the Holy Spirit and clear direction on how to defeat the enemy.
 - (iii) I. H. Marshall writes, “As young men, they are now explicitly said to be strong, and the reason for their strength is given: the word of God lives in them. This is a positive expression of what was denied in the case of merely nominal believers in 1:8; 2:4. Reception of God’s word is a source of spiritual strength which goes beyond the force of mere teaching. . . . It is by this personal, subjective power that the objective victory of Jesus over the evil one becomes a reality for believers” (Marshall, 141).
 - b. The Word of God is unlike any other literature on earth: it is a means of grace.
 - (i) It is the source of light:
 - (a) It is true, and not a lie.
 - (b) It tells us how to walk on the path of safety.
 - (c) How to avoid and escape the enemy’s snares.
 - (ii) It is a source of power.
 - (a) It is the bread of life.
 - (b) Through faith, it communicates not only truth but the influence of the Spirit.
 - (c) By obeying it, it is a means of not losing spiritual strength through quenching the Spirit.
 - (iii) It is a defensive and offensive weapon.
 - (a) Jesus used the Word when He was tempted by the enemy and not only stayed his attack, but repelled him (Matt. 4).
 - (b) The Word is like a sword, the sword the Spirit uses against the lies and temptations of the enemy (Eph. 6:17).
 - (1) The Greek word used actually refers to a small sword or dagger.
 - (2) Perhaps the idea is that it is able to home in on those particular lies of the enemy and defeat them.
 - (3) Satan attacks with his fiery darts, and we retaliate with this holy dagger, fending off his deceptions and sending him away.
 - (4) The Word gives us the direction, the Spirit the holy fear and love we need to hold fast to it and apply it.
 - (5) As we use the Word, as we overcome our sins, we grow in grace and move outside of the enemy’s reach. Not absolutely. We are always vulnerable to some extent. But less so than before, as long as the Word continues to dwell richly in us.

- (iv) Here are further encouragements to us to be much in the Word, in meditation, and in applying that Word to our lives.
- (v) The more richly our lives are rooted in its truths, the more victorious we will be over the enemy (Ex. Edwards, Whitefield, Luther, etc.).

C. How is this different than the unbeliever's experience? It is quite the opposite for him.

1. He does not overcome the evil one, but is overcome by him.
 - a. He generally doesn't realize he is because he is blinding by the enemy's deceptions.
 - b. He believes what Satan has to say.
 - c. He doesn't really care about it either, since he shares the same nature as the devil and desires what he wants.
 - d. Jesus said to those Pharisees who opposed Him and His Word, "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

2. Is it any wonder it is so difficult to talk to an unbeliever?
 - a. Unless the Lord opens his eyes by opening his heart, he will not listen to what we have to say, but will continue to be the captive of the devil.
 - b. Which is why we must pray for them and use the sword of the Spirit to defeat the enemies lies in their lives.
 - c. Let's pray that the Lord will use us this Christmas Season to reach our loves ones and others with the Gospel. Amen.