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## 1 John 2:12-14 – A Righteousness Realized Through Growth and Development

**1 John 2:12-14:** “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 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.”

How can I have confidence in my faith? How can I know for sure? I'm a child of God. I'm going to heaven. I Have an eternal hope. Can I know for sure? And John writes this epistle, yes, you can know for sure. Here it is. So, he begins to reveal to us those secrets of knowing and having confidence in our faith. He begins by declaring that you have to have a personal relationship with God. You have to comprehend that it's more than just an ethereal spiritual event, that it has to be something physical as well. It's like you could talk to somebody for so long over the phone, but you would like to see them face to face; and there has to be that personal contact. So, he starts off, interestingly enough, talking about the fact that the things that we've seen, that we've handled with our hands, that we've touched. He begins to talk about his relationship with the person of Jesus Christ who came on the earth, and he actually felt Him. Think about that. See, Gnostics and many people in this world would want to pass off our experience as being something that is maybe a spiritual happening, but not something that really has any effect on your everyday life.

The reason why it's so important that we know that Jesus actually came is because one of the statements that he makes in this epistle is, who is the Antichrist but the one that denies that Jesus is the Christ. (1 John 2:22) And he goes on and says, and this is the way that you can tell if it's the spirit of the Antichrist, that you must believe that He's come in the flesh. Well, what is he talking about? Well, what he's talking about is it's got to go beyond just this spiritual moment. It has to be a part of all of you. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all of your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5) It's not just a spiritual moment that transcends us into this place, but it's beyond. It is actually something that begins to work its way through us. Paul will write in Romans, present your bodies, that will be your physical, as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1) What the world would want to say, and what many people would like to say, is that “Have an experience but don't change my life. I don't want to start changing the things that I do. I don't want to keep certain things away from my flesh.” And God says “No, you need to change everything.” So, Scripture begins to talk to us about this interesting word “repentance.” Christ came proclaiming repentance. John the Baptist announces repentance. Jesus then comes and says, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mathew 4:17) What is He talking about? Well, what He's talking about, “*metanoēō*,” is

that you have got to start thinking differently and your life has to be lived differently. There has to be a reality in your faith, not just experientially, in a spiritual moment; but there has to be a change in your life, the things that you do, the way that you interact with people. It has to come out through the flesh; and that transformation is kind of hard to swallow, when you think about it, because almost everything that the word of God is telling us to do goes against our physical nature. I mean, when Jesus comes and He says the greatest will be the least, that just goes against me. When He talks about the fact that I need to be the servant of them all, man, I'm not really fond of that. The Lord is teaching me how to be a servant, but on the scale of servanthood, I don't rate really high on that; and there's something about our nature that resists those kinds of things.

Scripture says that you have to forgive, but it's like God doesn't know certain people in my life. So, what do you mean forgive? Are you talking about that I just ignore them from now on? So, when you read Philippians 2 and it says that I'm supposed to hold others in higher esteem than myself, I mean, who does that? Everything in Scripture really goes against our physical nature. James will write in his epistle, he'll go, "Look, faith without works is dead. It's got to be real in your life. It's got to be something that transforms your life, and you can't walk up to a brother that's in need and say, 'be warm, be filled, be clothed.' You can't do that. You actually have to go help him." And as John will say in 1 John, you can't close up your heart when you see somebody in need. You go, "But do I really have to do something?" You have to take the spiritual and put it into the work of the flesh. It has to be a part of your life.

So, the wonderful point of the beginning of this book is that this is something tangible. It's something real. It's something a part of my life that I handled, and I saw; and beyond that you have to be real if you're going to have a relationship. If a relationship is what's going to bring stability in your confidence, then you're going to have to be truthful. Unfortunately, here it goes. So, you're a sinner. I don't know why people have such a hard time admitting that. I mean, all you have to do is think about all that guilt that's piled up in your head and you know that you're a sinner. But of course then your defense mechanism crops up and you go, "No, I'm not. I'm better than him anyway." So, you start doing it. Paul says when you compare yourself with each other, you're not really thinking here, because it's not according to the standards of one another, but it's according to the standards of God. So, everything has to change. Where does the change begin? Well, John says you're going to have to get real with this. The second thing that he says in chapter 1 is you're going to have to be truthful. You can't say that you don't have any sin. If you say you have no sin, you're lying. The truth is not in you. The very evidence of the Spirit of God within me is that I'm extremely cognizant that I am a sinner.

I was talking to somebody the other day and they were saying how wonderful this person is, how wonderful that person is. I said, "I get in Scripture and the more I'm in Scripture, the more I realize just what a wretch I am. In fact, it just becomes more accentuated. So, the point of Scripture is to get me to get real with myself, and that brings me to the real of God, because God is holy, God is righteous, God is perfect. The reason why we repent is we comprehend that

we fall short of the glory of God. We miss the mark of the glory of God, and so sin literally is missing that mark of perfection, and it's a realization. It's often that I tell people in the new members class that sin isn't as much what you do wrong, it's what you don't do right. What you don't do right is you're not perfect. So, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, literally you miss the bull's eye as the word "sin" is an archery term. So, Scripture is referring to the fact that we've got to admit that. We also have to admit that God is the righteous one, not us. Now, I know that it's kind of an axiomatic statement because of the fact that it just seems obvious. I mean, He's God and we're not, but how many times do we argue with God when He tells us to do something? We go, "I wouldn't do it that way." And we start giving Him plan B's along the way. Our thought is that we can manipulate this in our minds, and we begin to literally rewrite laws. Of course, we know the distortions, even Peter says the unstable and the untaught distort Scripture. So, the Scripture is distorted, but the Spirit of God gives you a desire, "I just want to learn what is pleasing to God. I just want to do what He says." What's bizarre to me is that those things that God is telling me to do, that I read that my flesh goes, "Whoa;" those are the very things, the Spirit of God goes, "You know you need to do it." I can't explain it. Obviously, it's not me, but the love of God compels me, and I have to do it. It's the evidence that the Spirit of God is within you, the truth.

John's point, as he goes into 1 John 2, is that there's this evidence that you understand where righteousness comes from. In 1 John 2:1, he says, "My little children." Let me just say this, we're going to be looking in 1 John 2:12 where he repeats that phrase, "My little children." I just want to emphasize that that particular phrase he uses the word "*teknon*," which is dealing with, and oftentimes used as one discipling talks to his disciples. It's a phrase of endearment, as he is a teacher and encouraging them. So, "My little children" is referring to not just young people, it is dealing with the older ones as well, but the relationship that he has with them is he is teaching them and in this position of teaching he also feels very kind and loving towards them.

1 John 2:1. "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;"

Now that one simple phrase is telling us that I'm not the source of righteousness, Jesus is. We all come in with all kinds of baggage as we come into salvation, and we all have different ideas of what right looks like. There are things that have in some way influenced us. Sometimes bad things, sometimes good things, sometimes the family, sometimes education, but there are things that have influenced us to think a certain way; and what we have to do when we come to the word of God is we have to lay those things aside. We oftentimes talk about it at the Bible study, and one of the first things that you need to do when you come into the word of God is ask a simple question: "What does it say?" Not what do you want it to say, but "What does it say?" And you keep coming back to things that you know are kind of repulsive to the flesh, but the realization is, wait a minute, God's the righteous one. I'm not. He knows best. So, when Scripture tells me to do something, I do it. Hold that person in higher esteem than you. Stop

thinking of yourself. I mean, we're just naturally egocentric, so it rubs us the wrong way. "What do you mean, think of somebody else better than me?" Well, that's what Christ did. He took on the form of a bond servant, He emptied Himself. As Paul will say to the Corinthians, He was rich, yet He became poor that you might have riches. So, that's an interesting example of thinking of somebody more highly than yourself. It is that selflessness. Well, that's that Spirit. Who is the righteous one? Who is the paragon for righteousness? Stop looking around at everybody else. "Well, that person is always so godly." All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Christ our righteousness. The wonderful thing is, he goes on to say, He became the propitiation, the atoning victim. He died for our sins. Even though He was sinless, He died for us. So, the standard is set so high that it's impossible for us to say, or even boast about how good we are. We don't come to church to measure each other with ourselves. We come to church to glorify Christ. He is the righteous one. If you come clean with this, you can have a relationship with God. If you have a relationship with God, you can have confidence in your salvation because if at any point you begin to think "I think it was my righteousness," now every time you fail, every time you slip, you're going to be feeling doubt because hey, it's in your ball court. Your righteousness is in your ball court, right?

I like the way that it's put, if you look with me, in Titus 3, as Paul was reminding Titus and those that are in Crete; which they're not necessarily godly people, but the reminder is "Titus, I know you're ministering people that aren't necessarily wonderful, but we need to remember that we once were that way too." You know, you're a Christian for 5,10,20,30,40,50 years... So, you're a Christian for a long time, and your perception is, "I've arrived," and you never can leave that point, Christ my righteousness.

The interesting point is in Titus 3:3,

"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

I still wrestle with some of this stuff.

Titus 3:4. "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

Titus 3:5. He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"

"He saved us." We didn't save Him.

"Well, I think this is what needs to be done." We do things and we try to impress people and people pat us on the back, there's no deed of righteousness that I can do that in any way matches to God. If I can comprehend that the righteous standard is far beyond what I could do. All of my righteousness is like filthy rags. If I can stay there, now I can have a relationship with God. "Have mercy upon me, a sinner." I can approach Him in a way that we can have a transparent relationship. Remember, he says God is light and in Him there's no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5) So, you can't be obscure with Him. You can't dodge the shadows in the shadows.

You have to come clean with Him and go, "God, You know me and You know how I battle with this." But this is the door for the relationship and John wants us to know that.

As you go back to 1 John 2, he begins to reveal that this righteousness is something that is only Christ, and something that has to come within me to change me. Who can explain salvation? Who can explain being born again? Nicodemus was trying to figure it out, "You mean I have to go back in my mother's womb and do this thing again till I get it right?" That could be very confusing.

1 John 2:5. "but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:"

Something has happened inside. Obviously, it's not something that happens because we've had enough training, or because we've studied enough, or because we've been to enough messages. There has to be literally a change within us, and the love of God is realized. It is the love of God that constrains us, really, if you think about it. For God so loved me, and somehow, I grasp that, somehow, I received that, and the Spirit of God then empowers me to be enlightened. It reveals my sin but reveals God's grace. Reveals my shortcomings, but I see His mercy and everything, and I begin to do everything that I do, not because the law tells me to do it, but because I just love Him so much. Why wouldn't I want to do that? So, there's a transformation that takes place. His point is that it, there has to be a real transformation. Sometimes we talk to people, and we try to convince them to do the right thing.

I remember talking to an individual a while back and they were saying, "I was talking to this person in my family and trying to..." I said, "Well, have they ever received Christ as Lord of their life?" And they said, "I don't know." I said, "Well, that would be a first because you're trying to tell them to do certain things that it's impossible for them to want to do on their own." There has to be a change, and oftentimes, we go around trying to change the world and trying to get them to think like us. They're not going to think like you do. They're not believers. In fact, Scripture will actually say they're not even born yet. So, you're talking to, as Paul will say in Ephesians, a dead man. You were dead in your trespasses and sin. I don't know how good you are convincing a dead person of anything, but I can tell you this, you're not going to change their life; and that's the point. There has to be a transformational thing that happens and it is Christ in us, the hope of glory. He really displays the fact that it's the love of God that moves us and is the impetus to do what He says to do. So, you keep His commandments, you do what He says. Why is it you and I are constrained to do it? Because I love Him so much and because He's the one that told me to do it, and I know He's not going to steer me wrong. I know that every good and perfect gift comes from above, I know that He's the father of lights and there's no variance of shadow shifting. I know that He's causing all things to work together for good for me; not one good thing will He withhold. I'm going to do it. Even though it goes against the proclivities of my flesh, I'm going to do it because I love Him so much. So, you'll keep His commandments, you're getting real.

Now, what's interesting in 1 John 2:12-14 is he begins to reveal to us that there's a progression that happens, or growth. You actually grow. Well, you're born, and growing; and we see parallels to this, to the physical and to the spiritual in many respects. Obviously, the whole concept of being born again, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. So, there's kind of an alignment as you were born in the flesh, there has to be a birth, a beginning. There's a beginning and in receiving Christ as Lord and Savior, the Spirit of God comes within you. Are you immediately mature? And the wonderful thing is that God has given you instantly everything that you need to mature. Instantly.

In fact, if you look at me in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul writes something extremely interesting as he writes the beginning to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1:4. "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 1:5. that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

1 Corinthians 1:6. so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

So, what's his point? That you've got everything that you need to grow. Now, what we know about the Corinthians is that they weren't growing; but it wasn't because they didn't have everything they needed to grow. From what I understand, and I kind of brushed off the dust of my human growth and development book, this psych book this past week, but from what they write, although the newborn baby has almost all the brain cells he will ever have, his central nervous system is not developed nor organized. The newborn is virtually unaware of the stimulus around him. It goes on, and says, that the newborn is literally oblivious to the fact that people around him are helping him. Somebody who comes to know the Lord and they're still egocentric and their thought is: "How does this affect me?" Basically, all that they can think because everything that is happening is just about "me" and there's not a sense of necessarily gratitude or anything like that. It's just that "I'm saved, I'm rescued, good." Many times, a newborn will respond in such a way that is oftentimes offensive to people; even as you saw Paul when he is converted himself, he goes around and argues with the people and offends them. The fact the matter is, "I've got to do this, this is the way I feel." So, everything that they see and everything they judge is based on how they feel and what they experience. They don't take into consideration anything else. That's one of the ways that you can tell an immature believer, is that they're still stuck on "How does this person affect me? How does this church affect me?" That's where they're stuck.

So, an interesting point, especially as you go through the book of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:1. "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:2. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

1 Corinthians 3:3. for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"

You're still egocentric. So, everything that they begin to do, and that he begins to talk to them about are things that affect them. He says, you need to be careful going into certain places, somebody else may stumble if you do that; and the Corinthian goes, "What do I care that somebody else stumbles? I want to go in there, so I'm going to go in there." he goes, "Well, gee, guys, it's about time to grow up, isn't it?"

So, as we come into 1 John 2:12-14, we're going to be realizing that there are growth stages. Peter will write, grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. There is a growth involvement. You have all that is necessary, the Spirit of God has come within you; but there are certain things that you do to participate in the growth. I mean, a kid is going to start sprouting up regardless of whether he's all in or not, but he has to make a decision on how he interacts with the people around him, and if he's going to match the maturation of his body. God is moving in our lives, and He says, "Now you've got skin in the game. I have given you everything that's necessary. Now let's grow."

If you look, as John writes to these that are there,

1 John 2:12. "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake."

Once again, it's a phrase of endearment. So, he uses the word "*teknion*." By the way, by the time he comes down to the end of 1 John 2:13,

"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father."

That's "*paidion*." So, "*paidion*," and "*teknion*" are two different words. The first word that he's using is really dealing with one who is discipling and a term of endearment. The second word that is being used is like a child. It is used for children from birth to maybe 5-12 years old. So, it's dealing with children. He's talking about children in their faith. Once again, what we're going to see in the passage is the maturation process in the book. At first, he's writing to the collective. So, the phrase is:

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake."

It's the one thing that we all have. I don't care where you are in your maturation process. It's the one thing that we all have in common. Our sins are forgiven. It's the one thing that unites us all together, right? Right. Because I'm never at a point where I'm going to say, "Ok, I've arrived."

I mean, Paul will even say in Philippians 3:12, not that we've already attained this, but we press on towards the mark of the high calling. But the one thing that I can relate to a newborn Christian, as well as me in this position that I'm in, is I can turn to him and go, "You know what, brother? I agree with you. My sins have been forgiven." And it's the camaraderie that we feel in that place. But then it begins to get more specific in the process, and so he starts off by declaring this:

"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning."

Now the question is: Who exactly is he talking about? And the answer is, He's already been defined in 1 John 1. I like the fact that Scripture defines these things for us so that we don't have to figure them out. But in 1 John 1, what does he say?

1 John 1:1. "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—"

Who is he talking about? Jesus. So, when he uses the phrase, "you know Him who has been from the beginning;" what's he talking about? You knew Jesus. What's also interesting is that he seems to be talking to the elders. Now, we know that 1 John, much like Revelation, was written later, but here John is still alive; and he also knows that there are others. But we know that Christ appeared to even 500 others after His resurrection that had actually seen Him and been with Him. So, in many respects, he's talking about the fact that you were with the beginning One. You saw Him, and it's interesting that he refers to Him in such way, because we know one of the great points of the Gospel of John that John writes as well is to demonstrate that the creator of the universe became flesh. The one who was the source of all things, or we would call Him the beginning One. The one who began all things, the very source of all creation, you got to touch, you got to handle, you got to be with Him. So, it's an interesting picture and description. We're going to see that there's more involved in that, but initially, what he's talking about, you guys have actually been with Him. You've talked with Him, and this is a great picture.

It says:

1 John 2:13. "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father."

He's almost going down the scale, fathers, young men, then he'll go to children. Where is this relationship? Well, what he's conveyed is that there's a specific kind of relationship that we have at different stages of our lives. The relationship, obviously, within this particular passage, that a young man has is that he can do something. He can strive, he can accomplish something, and it is in accomplishing things that he knows God in that relationship. I think one of the problems oftentimes, is that you have a new believer, they're not seeing things the way you do, and it's really easy to get condescending. I mean, you're not going to walk up to a 2-year-old



and say, "Be thoughtful of your brothers and sisters," and, "where's your empathy?" You're just not going to be there with them. The point is that there's a maturation process, and God is revealing that at each stage there's a unique development and growth that's going on, and we need to encourage one another in this vein. We're ultimately pointing them to be like Christ, but you grow to be like Christ, and you grow and the nurture and admonition of our Lord and Savior. I was looking at, once again, the human growth and development book and it reminded me that a child from birth to year one is at the end of that particular stage, is trying to come to a completion of drive and hope. It's interesting. Then a child in their second year is trying to come to the place of actually controlling willpower. You walk up to somebody that's 20 years old, and you hope that willpower has been taken care of. Unfortunately, oftentimes they didn't make it on that 2-year-old stage, but one of the reasons why a 2-year-old is more aggressive is that God has given him that desire to take control. God says, "Yeah, take control. But let's do it and control yourself; not the universe around you." Whereas a 2-year-old wants to control the universe. Then a child, ages 3-5, they're literally forming direction and purpose. In fact, they say that by the age of 3, your personality is completely formed. It's pretty interesting. So, the other statement was, from the time that the child gets to be 6 years old to 12 years old, they're working on competence. One of the reasons why kids at that age kind of get more skilled at things and become competent in things. An adolescent begins to focus on devotion and fidelity. That's pretty interesting. So, by the end of that stage, the hope is that they've completed that stage. Then by the time you come into early adulthood, the goal is to produce and to care for someone else. So, the different stages that we see in the maturation process of the physical is true as well in the spiritual. God is saying that there are different stages in your life.

And if you look specifically at the "young men," (1 John 2:13)

"I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one."

The point is this place of completion. In other words, you're going through the training and the relationship with God in this stage of youth. Alright, this is how we finish this stage: You overcome the evil one. The point is that the things that are influencing this young person and will oftentimes bring him into the way of the world, he's finding victory in. What you're going to find in the passage is that the way that he does that is by keeping the word of God in his heart.

1 John 2:14. 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.

"Strong" meaning firm, and sure.

At the beginning of Psalm 119, it will convey this point as well.

Psalm 119:9. "How can a young man keep his way pure?  
By keeping it according to Your word.

Psalm 119:10. With all my heart I have sought You;  
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

Psalm 119:11. Your word I have treasured in my heart,  
That I may not sin against You.”

It's not hidden, it's treasured. The point is that the young man, at this stage, begins to love the word of God; and it's by loving the word of God and beginning to abide by the things that it says that integrity and character and all these things are built in his life. How do we know that he graduated? He's overcome the influences. So, he's talking about his stage, and I would say this, if you don't overcome this stage, you're still stuck in the stage.

If you look in 1 John 2:13, it goes all the way down to children, “*paidion*” is the word that is used; which is dealing with little ones. He says,

“I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.”

Now, it almost sounds like the same thing that it's written to the fathers, but it's not. The point is, you know who? The Father. What does he mean? You know the one that takes care of you. In other words, little children have a relationship with God based on the fact that God takes care of me. He oversees me, He protects me. You see that interesting picture of Paul dealing with the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1. Then in 1 Thessalonians 2, he begins to talk about, “I was a father to you.” So, the Thessalonians really weren't at the stage of great victory at this point. In fact, one of the things he has to remind them is, “Ok, let's deal with these sins.” But the point is that they were still being fathered. God says, “Now, it's a wonderful thing to be fathered, but you've got to grow up sometime.” Once again, so many people are back in the same place and they come before the Lord and they go, “Could you feed me some milk? Could you put the bottle in my mouth?” And God goes, “Ok, like you're 20 years old. It's time for you to hold it yourself.”

If you look with me in Hebrews 5, it's emphasized there as well. The spirit of God begins to direct us, Hebrews 5:11, about things that are pretty difficult to understand.

Hebrews 5:11. “Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.”

“Concerning him” is talking about Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:12. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.”

Hebrews 5:13. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Hebrews 5:14. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

What's interesting is he goes on, he goes, "So let's quit laying the same foundation of the instructions of washing, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead, eternal judgment."

"Am I going to be judged?" Stop. We've grown way past that. We're in the realm of not worrying about "me." But a babe is constantly thinking, "How does this affect me?" "Dad, can I have this? Dad, can I have this?" And he says, "Ok, I'm writing to you because you know God as a Father that cares for you." A wonderful thing. In many respects, we never lose that, but the point is that we go beyond the stage.

If you go back to 1 John, as it refers to the fathers, which repeats the same phrase almost verbatim in 1 John 2:13 and in verse 14.

1 John 2:14. 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."

Once again, it's in the perfect tense, which means that it's this complete relationship that you have with Him. But the but the phrase that he used, "who has been from the beginning," are two words that I just want to emphasize. One, he's referring to them as fathers, and the 2nd he's referring to them as a relationship with God from the beginning. Now, we already talked about the fact that they may have been literally around when Jesus was here and were able to see Him from the beginning, but it's also talking about the fact that you know His intent, which was from the beginning. In other words, a young person will hop on board, "Let's get things done. Let's get things finished." And you go, "How are things at church?" "Well, we did this, we did this. You know, we took the hill type thing." And God goes, "Yeah, that's great." But the father goes, "Yeah, but I know what God was doing in that." And he begins to see it. It kind of reminds me of Matthew 19, when the Pharisees are testing Jesus about marriage, right?

Matthew 19:3. "Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"

Matthew 19:4. And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,"

Well, what that's telling us is that Christ is revealing His intent in the creation of the relationship. There are many things that a young person may do to minister but doesn't really comprehend all the ramifications. For example, if you're like a teenager in ministry, all you're thinking about doing is getting the job done; but you're not thinking of how it affects those around you. You're not thinking about what God is doing in the lives of other people. Sometimes, you go in like a bull in a china shop and you just start getting things done and you're walking over people that could be helping or you could be building them up by encouraging them to do it. But you don't perceive the intent from the beginning. You're not

fathoming that because you really hadn't walked in that position. So, he uses the word "fathers" to define these people. In other words, you've become a father. You begin to see that wonderful picture, in which once again Paul describes himself as a father to the Thessalonians, and he clearly describes himself as a father to Timothy and to Titus. The point is that at this stage we begin to do almost everything for the other person, as a father would for his children; and our goals and our desires are now in them, and we desire to see them grow. In fact, ultimately to the point, you come to the end of 2 Timothy and Paul is passing over the baton to Timothy. He goes, "I finished the course."

So, what's the goal of the fathers? Well, at the end of our life, the goal is to pass on that baton, to encourage people and to encourage people in the real reason for why they're doing what they're doing. So, we're instilling in them love and involvement in people's lives. We're training other people. When people first come into the body, oftentimes they're just so infatuated with how everything is affecting them and you understand, oftentimes you're even kind of walking on egg shells. I understand that, but the goal is to grow. You don't want to stay there. Love doesn't take into account a wrong suffered. Well, where does that come from? Well, his point in 1 Corinthians 13, to the immature Corinthians is that if you're grown up, you're not thinking about yourself. Right? And your efforts are focused on building up the body, it's strengthening the weak as Romans 15 will so aptly put it, you who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength, and not just please yourself. So, there's a maturity that's going on. I guess what Scripture would tell us is, if you're not growing, then did real life come in you? Because the evidence that a 20-year-old was born, is that at the age of 20, he looks like a 20-year-old. Then you take a 20-year-old and there's no birth, there's no growth, there's no movement, there's no change. Are you dead? I mean, what's the validity there? So, John is saying to us, you want something real? There's got to be a real confession, there's got to be a real realization that it's all Christ, and there has to be real growth. You're going to see the growth at the different stages and you're going to relate to God at different levels but grow. And we're going to see that in the wonderful pages of 1 John.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and for Your encouragement to us as we seek to be more like You and to grow in the nurture and admonition of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You even tell us in Your word that Christ Jesus Himself came and He learned obedience. How wonderful that was, and from the time that He submitted to His parents, to the time that He says, "I've got to be about my Father's business." We realized that there was quite a transformation. How wonderful it is that we can relate to you on different levels, and on our maturity journey we love You in different ways. As a Father who cares for us and tenderly

protects us, as one who encourages us and stimulates us to serve and to work and to get things done and to find victory over those sins that easily could beset us. But how wonderful it is to come to the place of understanding Your intent from the beginning and Your will for us.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just asking you to ask yourself if there's real growth. John, in many respects, is showing you what it looks like, but he's also having you examine yourself, because where there is the heart of Christ within us, there is real growth. He has taken us to the place of going beyond ourselves and into the realm of caring for others, of actually producing other disciples.