

# Kindled Fire

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## Persevering in Holiness

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### 1 John 2:13-14

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How does a tree make it though a baseball? I want you to visualize this in your mind's eye. Picture, if you will, a baseball with the root of a tree that has grown right through the middle of it.

Now, make sure that you do not think of a ball that has been ruined in any way. It shouldn't have any cracks or crevices in it, except the one that the root has made as it burrowed through.

Maybe you can't picture it. Maybe it's a little too farfetched of a thing for you to imagine. But years ago some men were working on leveling ground for a church's parking lot. As they were excavating the land, they unearthed a just such a thing.

Some of you may have ripped open a baseball before. You know that when you remove the cover there is miles of string wound up around the core of the ball. What must have happened is that some time ago this ball was buried in the ground.

First it just touched the outside of it. Then somehow it wormed its way past the leathery shell. And little by little it squeezed under and over every thread of that coiled up string. It pressed on through with a determined tenacity. Mind you, it went right through the middle of the baseball until it broke through to the other side. It is amazing to think about how difficult it must have been, but it persevered right through—pressing on towards its goal without ever giving up.

That little root is a reminder of the tenacity the Lord calls us to possess. Each one of us is called to press on to the upward call in Christ Jesus. No matter how hard it might be to battle the flesh—no matter how the world may press in upon us and try to deter us in our walk with the Lord Jesus, we must be determined to persevere. We must tenaciously pursue our goal of greater holiness.

In order to encourage this kind of tenacity John inserted this section of Scripture. As you may remember from last time, we said that this odd little portion of his epistle was put here to give us a little motivation to fight the good fight of faith. He chooses some things that would encourage us to press on through all the trials to greater obedience.

And today I want you to notice the last two encouragements he gives us. In order to give us a little boost he reminds us that we have the pleasure of having a relationship with the Lord and victory over Satan.

Now he knows that not just anything will motivate you. So he pinpoints the two most meaningful things that he can think of. The first of which is the simple pleasure of having a relationship with the Lord.

### I. The pleasure of a relationship with God

He says in verse 13, *"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning."*

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You might have noticed too that this is the only bunch addressed that does not change the second time they are addressed. Children are first spoken to regarding the forgiveness of sins. Then in verse 13 John speaks to them about their knowing the father. In addressing the young men, which we will look at in just a moment, there is the repetition of "overcome the evil one." But more is added.

When he addresses the fathers through, not one word is added or changed. The only thing that is said is that they "know him who is from the beginning." I can only believe that nothing more is needed. This is the one thing that is most dear to them.

This past week my wife and I celebrated our 13th wedding anniversary. My wife is quite precious to me. But you are a fool if you think that I'm going to spend \$5 for a card for her! My deferring is more than just me being cheap though. I doubt that I could ever find a card that would rightly express my true sentiments. So every year I make her a card.

But during that time of card making I had a lot of time to reflect on our relationship. I was sort of panning back through the years as I was trying to think of just the right thing to say. And as I was doing that, I found myself thinking how much she means. She means more to me now than she did 5 years ago. Or even 10 years ago. Or 15 years ago. I have the pleasure of knowing my wife.

Now, we've only known each other for 15 years total (13 of which in marriage), but the more we are together the more I find that it is just a pleasure knowing her and having the relationship that we do.

Those of you who have walked with the Lord for any amount of time will most certainly confess the same thing. You have a relationship with the Lord. You know Him and that is a prize that you find invaluable.

But it is not just the relationship that you have. It is what you have come to know about the Lord that makes the relationship so deep and meaningful. John repeats the fact that you know him "who was from the beginning." There is a lot we can say about this. What is said here entails a lot of theology that you have built up over the years. Your relationship has grown, and the reason it has is because you have a greater degree of knowledge of who he is than you did when you first started out. So it is almost like having more God to glory in.

Some of you have read the Narnia books. Perhaps you remember the scene in the second book, Prince Caspian, where the little girl, Lucy, meets the great Lion, Aslan, again. They had been apart for some time and the first thing she notices is that this mighty lion is quite a bit larger than she remembered him. Shocked by his stature she exclaims, "Aslan, you're bigger!"

He responds by saying, "That is because you are older, little one...every year you grow, you will find me bigger." What he was saying there is a beautiful picture of what our relationship with the Lord is like. The Lord God never grows. We are the ones that grow. With every passing year our relationship with the Lord deepens because our knowledge of His true nature expands.

And to say that we have known him "who was from to beginning"—doesn't that state something about our perception of him? Does it not magnify his greatness?

In theological terms this is talking about "the immensity of God." It's getting at the fact that the Lord supersedes time and space.

These are two boundaries to us that we cannot escape. We are confined to time and space so much so that we cannot even grasp what is really being said here. I mean, to say, "God is before the beginning," is to talk in terms of time (you can't be before the beginning.)

The same goes with spacial references. God is not confined to space. He stands outside the boundaries of the universe. But there you go, how can you be outside space? We are using spacial terms to talk about being outside space.

It sort of boggles your mind. These things are, to a great degree, incomprehensible. But that is the beautiful irony of what is said here. We have known him who is from the beginning. Though our minds cannot fully comprehend him, we have known him—we have had a relationship with him. And that really explains everything.

When we remember that we have this relationship, and when we really reflect on how wonderful it is, then it should encourage us to press on towards greater obedience.

But it isn't just the fact that we have a relationship with the Lord that should encourage us. We should be induced further by the fact that we have the pleasure of victory over Satan.

## II. The pleasure of victory over Satan

Again, in verse 13 he says, "I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one."

Then in verse 14, it is expanded. It is almost as if he writes a little commentary on what it means. He says, "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have



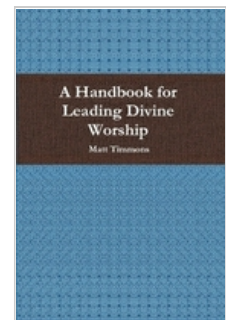
The Danger of a Life of Pleasure



How Shall We Escape If We Neglect So Great a Salvation?



Judgments, A Call to Repentance



A Handbook for Leading Divine Worship

## Matt's Sermons

All  
 1 John  
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## Archives

May 2012  
 April 2012  
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overcome the evil one.”

Now, is this not what young Christians need to hear? Those of you who may be of my rank in the Christian life probably need to grab on to this and hold it tight. Newborns in the faith are typically ecstatic. They are so wrapped up in that initial salvation that they are flying high. They love that they are forgiven and the thought of eternal life and a new relationship with Jesus is puts them in a high state.

People who are older in the faith, the fathers if you will, they simply love the fact that they have known the Lord. But people who have gone down the road a bit—they are past that initial stage, but not quite to the point where they are a father in the faith, they need the reminder that Satan’s power is vanquished.

What is most characteristic about being a teenager or young adult in the faith? Personally, I think it is the struggle we have with sin. That freshness of the faith has worn off a bit and now you find yourself in the midst of the battle. You’ve grown a bit and now you are finding that you are engaged in a fight. You are finding that the devil has it out for you. He seems to have launched all his fiery darts upon you. It is a “shock and awe” campaign, and you may feel like you are being bombarded with temptation on every side.

Sometimes you can even go to bed feeling clobbered. You’ve just been hammered all day long. There’s the temptation to be full of pride. Who wants to be humble? It’s wonderful having that nice comeback and snark that really rips someone up. It’s good because it not only tears them down, but it makes you look so good. Then there’s the temptation to worry. How many things do you have to get done? How many people are pulling you this way or that? How are things going to pan out in the next couple of weeks or months? And what if it doesn’t get done in time? Or if it doesn’t turn out this way? Or if she says that? Worry can be like a leech in your brain. It sits in your mind and tries as hard as it can to suck the life right out of you.

Oh, we could name many, many more things that you have to resist. We could talk about your vanity, your coveting, your tendency to bend the truth or procrastinate. The list can go on and on. And as I said, you can feel like you’ve been bludgeoned all day long by the devil.

And in the midst of all this you need to remember that you have overcome the evil one.

“Doesn’t feel like I’ve overcome! Feels more like I’ve succumbed!” No, my friend. You have overcome the evil one. The word of God abides in you. The stony wall of your heart has been torn down. The word of God has penetrated into the deep recesses of your soul. And once that happens, Satan’s grip on you is vanquished. He can only pester you now with these temptations. He can only try to make your life miserable. No matter how successful he may be at that, he cannot defeat you. Satan may walk around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But he has a severe limp.

I once heard a story about a lion at a zoo. A crowd had gathered at the exhibit to marvel at the grandeur of the beast. I admit that I have been among those who have gawked over these animals. They are magnificent. To look at them is to view their magnificent power. But upon this occasion the crowd was amazed to see an older gentleman enter the exhibit. He was obviously on staff with the zoo and he had come in to do some cleaning. He took his broom in hand and began to sweep. Yet his demeanor was by no means restless. He continued to sweep through the cage, coming closer and closer to the lion. The crowd watched with fearful disbelief at how close he was coming to it. Finally, when he could go no further, he poked the beast with his broom. It obviously annoyed the lion. So he slowly got to its feet and moved on to the other side of the cage.

When the janitor made his exit someone asked him, “Were you not afraid of the lion?” he replied, “Aww, no. That lion is too old to be a threat, and he hasn’t got any teeth.”

We obviously do not wish to underestimate the power of the devil. He deserves a bit of reverence. But we do not live in fear of him. He has been overcome. At the cross, Christ delivered a blow to his head that has left him reeling ever since. And when the word of God took up its residence in you, Satan had his teeth ripped out. He is now powerless to do anything to you of eternal significance. He now has to resort to alternative means of antagonizing you and annoying you.

The greatest example of this is found in the life of Martin Luther. Some of you may know how Luther often struggled. Perhaps you have heard how one time he thought Satan was so close that Luther took an ink bottle and threw it at him.

There was another such instance in his life. One night he dreamed that he stood before the Judgment seat of Christ. He saw the books opened, and looking in he saw his name and a fearful record of all his sins next to it. Some were sins of omission. Some were sins of commission. Some were deliberate sins, others were sins of thoughtlessness. Satan then appeared at his side and began to accuse him, “Behold your record. There is no hope for you.”

But just then, to his inexpressible joy, he saw written in crimson letters across the page, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” With that, Satan was silenced.

This is Satan’s weakness. He is powerless because that word lives within you.

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**Conclusion:**

At my house we sometimes have trouble making it through dinner. Sometimes it is difficult getting through the vegetables. But then we remember the sweet treat. We think about what is for desert and that gives us a little bit of a boost to get those veggies down the hatch. The thought of what we will get gives us that push that we need.

That is what the Apostle attempts to do here. He wants to give you that same sort of inspiration. The only difference is that he doesn't dangle a carrot before your face. He doesn't persuade you with what you will one day get. He reminds you of what you now have. You now have in your possession the greatest treasures one ever could hold. You have a relationship with the one who is from the beginning and you have no relationship with Satan. You have been made strong and overcome the evil one.

Now, having been reminded of this, may you go serve your king.

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