

Doctrinal Summary of  
Spiritual Development & Maturity: The Spiritual Young Man

In 1 John 2:14, John identifies the third stage of spiritual maturity: the spiritual young man.

“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.”

The words “young men” are translated from the Koine Greek word νεανίσκοι (“ne-ah-nis-koi”) which more literally means, “new men, being initiators.” It describes a man who is freshly a man, having transitioned from a child to a young adult. Physically this would be marked by the completion of puberty in the body which would give the young adult the ability to procreate. Spiritually, it is marked by having learned and relied upon the instruction of the Father so that the child could successfully represent his family and operate above the evil in the world system. He has become strong as a result of the word of God abiding in Him.

The word “abides” is translated from the Koine Greek word μένει (“me-nei”) which more literally means, “it really performs the continuous type of action to remain in a place.” The word of God is the subject of this verb, therefore it is the word of God which remains in a specific place. The place is identified as the spiritual young man. For the word of God to abide in a believer, that believer must receive God’s word through instruction and apply God’s word to his circumstances by reliance upon it (cf. James 1:21-22). The spiritual young man is one who has done this; he has walked with God, learned His instruction, relied upon it, and now the word of God has made him strong. It is the same word of God which remains in him, operating as his thought process, that defeats the evil one.

The words “have overcome” are translated from the Koine Greek word νενικήκατε (“ne-ni-kae-ka-te”) which more literally means, “you all really have performed the completed action in the past with results continuing on to be overwhelmingly victorious over another.” It describes a victor in competition or battle who stands as having defeated the game or his competitor with overwhelming ability and success. The spiritual young man is one who stands as being victorious over the evil one because he has consistently relied upon God’s character and instruction to the point that it has become a reflexive part of his operation. Thus, when the attacks from the evil one arise, he is overwhelmingly victorious over him because of his trained reliance upon God’s instruction and character.

The “evil one” here is translated from the Koine Greek words τὸν πονηρόν (“ton po-nae-ron”) which more literally mean, “the one which is actively seeking and working to destroy the standard, based on initiation.” It is a clear reference to Satan (& Company and Associates) who are at work in the world system based on Satan’s initiation to destroy God’s standard. The evil one (Satan) works through his fallen angelic army to destroy God’s standard in the world system and those who are deceived by him through temptation, manipulation, and twisting of righteousness.

The spiritual young man, however, is not one of those who is overcome by Satan’s deception because of his reliance upon God’s instruction. This has been trained into him by his repetitious, purposeful decision to apply God’s word to his circumstances. His time as a spiritual young man begins with this reflexive victory over Satan & Company and lasts for as long as it takes for him to come to a comprehensive understanding of who Jesus Christ is as Lord.