

—{1}. **1 John 5:1-7. Overcomers**

A. Introduction

1. Scripture Reading: ¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. ⁵Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? — (1 John 5:1-5 NAS)

2. the civil rights movement some 40 years or so ago
 - a. led in large part by pastors of African-American churches
 - b. the most prominent being Martin Luther King, Jr
 - c. saw in these words a theme applying to their situation
 - d. seeing themselves as children of God through faith
 - e. singing, 'We Shall Overcome'

3. but, what does it mean to overcome?
 - a. the literal meaning of the word in this passage is 'to have victory, to conquer' – noun, 'nike'; verb 'nikao'
 - b. example of literal translation of verse 4 ... 'because every one who has been born of God conquers the world; and this is the conquest which conquered the world – our faith' or 'because everyone who has been born of God has victory over the world; and this is the victory that has been victorious over the world, *even* our faith.'
 - c. how do we conquer the world?
 - (A) Alexander the Great sought to conquer the world
 - (B) son of Philip, king of Macedon
 - (C) he and his army swept across Asia Minor (Turkey)
 - (D) around the coast of the Mediterranean to Egypt

- (E) and as far east as the borders of India
- (F) conquering every army that came out to oppose him
- (G) yet this great warrior

- (1) never understood what real victory was
- (2) after all these battles won and territory gained
- (3) he is said to have spoken these words
- (4) 'I regret that there are no worlds left to conquer'
- (5) and he never gained the victory over his own self
- (6) he died at age 33, ten days after a prolonged bout of eating and drinking

(H) this is not the conquest of which John is writing

d. what is this world that we are conquering?

(A) the word for world is 'kosmos' can mean, and is used in the Scriptures, in the following ways

- (1) the universe (as in English)
- (2) the physical world
- (3) the inhabitable world, mankind's habitation
- (4) and, after the Jewish manner of speaking
 - (a) people of this world, worldlings, as opposed to those who seek the kingdom of God
 - (b) the present order of things, as opposed to the kingdom of Christ and nearly equivalent to the term, 'this present age' – its values and habits

(B) it is this last meaning which in the forefront here

- (1) the fleshly nature which marks unregenerate man
- (2) that old nature, that old man, against which our new nature in Jesus Christ is at war

e. what is the character of this conquest?

- (A) well, it isn't what Alexander the Great thought it was
- (B) but, as is clearly evident in the passage as we read it
- (C) this is spiritual victory
- (D) the victory that Christians individually and collectively gain over the thinking of those 'Whose minds the god of this age (*kosmos*) has blinded, who do not believe, ...'

4. this has been a busy week so I apologize for there not being any handout this morning, but the outline of the message is:
 - a. Overcomers are Children of God
 - b. Overcomers are Folk of Faith
 - c. Overcomes are People of Love

B. Overcomers are Children of God

1. this fact is highlighted several times in this passage
 - a. verse 1a: **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...** — (NKJV)
 - b. verse 4a: **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.** — (NKJV)
2. now the whole point of this is quite straightforward
 - a. John has already described the character of the world over which we are to overcome, over which we are to have the victory in 2:15–16: **Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.** (NAS)
 - (A) the lust of the flesh – the sensuality of the world
 - (B) the lust of the eyes – covetousness for world's things
 - (C) the boastful pride of life – love of its ostentation
 - b. there is no point in anyone talking about overcoming the world as long as he or she is still its loyal citizen
 - (A) this is why Jesus said to Nicodemus, that ruler and teacher in Israel, **'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again."'** — John 3:3, 5-7 (NAS)
 - (B) Jesus makes it very clear – spiritual rebirth is a prime necessity before spiritual truth can be perceived
 - c. this troubles us, because it is part of our **'boastful pride of life'** that we like to feel we are 'masters of our fate' and can take the matter of salvation into our own hands

(A) yet the truth is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (NAS)

3. So, the one who is born again, born from above by the Spirit of God, and so made a child of God
 - a. 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, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. — (Titus 3:5-7 NAS)
 - b. that word, 'regeneration,' is just a \$10 word for 'being born again', the process carried out by God's Holy Spirit whereby we are made a new creature, by which we are raised from our state of death so that we may overcome the world
 - c. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. — (2 Corinthians 5:17 NAS)
 - d. Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. — (Colossians 3:1 NAS)
 - e. And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ... But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus — (Eph 2:1,4-6 NAS)
4. that is victory! ... that is overcoming! ... because God Himself has made us His children in the work of Christ Jesus

C. Overcomers are Folk of Faith

1. again this thought is repeated through this passage:
 - a. verse 1a: *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, ...* — (NKJV)
 - b. verses 4b-5: *... And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* — (NKJV)

2. Faith ... this is a tremendous subject

a. far too great to compass as a short part of one sermon

b. first of all, let me point out that the word 'faith' and the word 'believe' in the Greek are closely related: one names the action, the other is the action

(A) in some ways, the translators would have done us a service if they had used the word 'trust'

(B) the action is 'to trust' – I trust my wife

(C) the name of the action is 'trust' – she has my trust

c. Now this letter was written by the apostle John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

(A) this means that the words and their expression was kept from all error by the Holy Spirit who, as Jesus promised, guided John in all truth

(B) yet those words and their expression were words that John knew and used

(C) and John being a Jew, those words would take on the flavour and historic significance that every Jew would associate with them – they would have a Hebrew, Old Testament flavour to them, though written in Greek

d. the most common Hebrew words for believe and trust are:

(A) אָמֵן – ('aman) to build up or support; figuratively: to render or be firm or faithful; 'Amen' means 'let it be firm, true'

(B) בָּטַח – (batach) to hasten for refuge; figuratively: to trust, be sure, be confident

(C) חָסָה – (chasah) to flee for protection; figuratively: to have hope, make refuge, put trust

(D) these are practical words, not simply intellectual assent, but acknowledgement committing to action – the hymn, Hiding in Thee ⁻⁽²⁾ captures this

O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,

My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly.

So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be;

Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee.

(E) so the Greek: πιστεύω – (pisteuo) to have faith, to put faith in, to believe, to trust – and πίστις – (pistis) faith – include all the Hebrew ideas behind it

e. two great NT examples of such faith come to mind

- (A) in Luke 7: 1-10 (also Matthew 8) there is recounted the story of the centurion whose slave was sick and sent for help from Jesus. But the centurion felt unworthy for Jesus to come to him, but believed that Jesus had but to say the word. He simply entrusted the slave to Jesus who said concerning him, 'I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.'
- (B) the other, in Luke 18, was the humble tax gatherer who knowing his own helpless position, fled to God for salvation, casting himself upon God's mercy: 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (NAS) – that is faith!

3. verse 4 tells us that it is our faith that overcomes the world

- a. but verses 1 and 5 explain what is meant
- b. it is the custom of the day – be it New Age or whatever – to speak of faith as some mystic, spiritual exercise ... as an entity unto itself
- c. so we have the damning lie of tolerance being circulated, 'it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you have faith'
- d. nothing could be further from the truth!
- e. there is a body of truth upon which faith must be founded
 - (A) Jude 3 speaks of the 'faith once delivered to the saints'
 - (B) Ephesians 4:5, 13 speak of 'one faith' and 'coming to the unity of the faith'
 - (C) the New Testament has a number of short confessions of faith such as Romans 10: 9-10, Philippians 2:5-10, and Titus 2:11-14
 - (D) and here, we find that the essential character of the Christian faith is that it is founded upon a Person and upon the truth concerning that Person
- f. one: Jesus (of Nazareth, a carpenter and carpenter's son) is the Christ; He is Messiah, the promised Redeemer
- g. two: Jesus, the babe born in Bethlehem, and who walked the roads of Judaea and Galilee as an itinerant teacher; He is the Eternal Son of God
- h. saving faith is based upon God-Messiah Incarnate in Jesus

4. Now the tendency in this passage would be to put faith first

- a. before being born again
 - b. because, from our human perspective, faith is our first realization of the saving power of God
 - c. but I have followed the order dictated by the tenses in the original language; here is a literal translation of verse 1 by J. N. Young, 'Every one who is believing that Jesus is the Christ, of God he hath been begotten, ...'
 - d. the phrase, 'is born' or 'has been begotten' is in the perfect tense in Greek – that means that it is a past even which result in a current, continuing state
 - (A) the fact that you have been born means that your are now a living being
 - (B) the fact that you have been born again means that now you are a child of God
 - e. but the word for 'believing' is in the present tense
 - (A) in fact, in the form that is used
 - (B) in talks about a ongoing action
 - f. the faith then, that overcomes the world
 - (A) is not that easy 'believism' which confidently (and, erroneously asserts), 'I believed in Jesus 50 years ago and so I am saved'
 - (B) but a saving faith
 - (C) one that day by day rests upon the grace and promises of God, that flees to Him for refuge and protection
5. Last Sunday morning the CBC was playing a litany, or anthem of worship, the words of which are attributed to a prayer of John Chrysostom. The name Chrysostom, meaning 'golden mouthed' was given to him because of his great preaching. But he was great in other ways:
- a. Chrysostom was bold when it came to condemning sin and he was called before the Emperor, whom he had offended. He threatened Chrysostom with exile unless he apologized. Chrysostom replied, "You cannot exile me because this world is my father's house."
 - b. "I will kill you," said the Emperor. "No, you cannot, because my life is hid with Christ in God."
 - c. "I will take away your treasures." "No, you cannot, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there."
 - d. The Emperor was furious at this point. "I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left." "No, you cannot, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you cannot separate me ... I defy you;

for there is nothing that you can do to hurt me!" —^{3}.

e. this is practical faith; faith that overcomes the world!

D. Overcomers are People of Love

1. this too, is a theme, through this passage

a. verse 1b-3 — ... and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (NKJV)

b. God is the one who has begot, that is given birth to the children of God, to those having saving faith

2. Now John turns the argument around that he has previously used, so that, when we are expecting Him to say, 'This is how we know that we love God: by loving His children and obeying His commands' the Holy Spirit says rather

a. how do we know that in fact we do love each other not simply 'with word or tongue, but in deed and truth'? 3:18

b. it is because we love God; it is because we obey God

(A) we have been told that love to our brothers is shown by our being willing to die for them

(B) now we are told that proof of our love for our brothers is we love God we are willing to live by obeying Him

c. in practical terms,

(A) we will live so as not to be a stumbling block

(B) we will use our liberty in Christ as servants of God

3. the thrust of the argument in this passage has been expressed in this fashion, each item being fact —^{4}.

a. Every one that hath faith in the Incarnation is a child of God;

(A) every child of God loves the Father;

(1) therefore, every one that hath faith in the Incarnation loves God;

b. every one that hath faith in the Incarnation loves God;

(A) every one that loves God loves the children of God

(1) therefore, every one that hath faith in the Incarnation loves the children of God

4. overcomers will express their faith by their love

E. Conclusion — we, then, who know Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour may this morning give praise to Him for His overcoming power — **but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** — (1 Corinthians 15:57 NAS) — as we can now do as we sing in encouragement and praise, “Faith is the Victory”

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Hiding in Thee, William Orcutt Cushing (1823-1902)
3. From Romans Commentary, by Alan F. Johnson; original source used was Henry Hart Milman, “History of Christianity,” (New York: Crowell, 1881), 4:144 – Kerux illustrations #886
4. Plummer, the Cambridge Bible, cited in Expositor’s Greek Testament, *in loc*