

Overcome the World

One aspect of Christianity that is often overlooked is that it is a constant struggle. Many of us have heard the words of Jesus telling us; **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:28-30 NASB) Perhaps we have decided that by coming to Jesus we are set for a relaxing time until we find our way into heaven. Even in these words that speak of rest, we find that we are to take the yoke of Jesus. Yes, the load of that yoke is not as heavy as the worldly yoke, but there is a load to carry. In other passages, Jesus tells us we take up our cross to follow Him.

In Ephesians the 6th chapter, we find that we are to put on the armor of God. The image that we are to engage in spiritual warfare. Whether it is the image of wearing a yoke and pulling a load or the image of wearing armor and becoming a soldier to fight spiritual warfare; we do not find that Christian life is one spent reclining on posh recliners waiting out our life on earth. We are reminded throughout the scripture that we are to run the race, be faithful, not grow weary. When we look at those scriptures and realize that we have a job to do, we may question if we are up to the task. The world around us seems content to follow Satan and make our life as a Christian more difficult each day. There is an assurance that in Christ, we will overcome the world.

Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 John the 5th chapter and read the first eight verses.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ (Or *Messiah*, or *anointed one*) is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.* (1 John 5:1-8 NASB)

From these eight verses, we learn several things that we need to note. First, our belief in Jesus demonstrates something. We see that it goes beyond just believing that a person named Jesus lived. We believe that this Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one of God, He is the Christ. Jesus is the son of God (John 3:16). Paul writes in Galatians, **but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.** (Galatians 4:4-5 NASB)

Not only are we to believe Jesus is the Christ, we are to love God. Our love for God requires that we love His son this Christ of God. It is inseparable, we love God and we must also love Jesus the son of God.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ (Or *Messiah*, or *anointed one*) is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

Second, we show our love for God through our observance of His commandments. Isn't that what we just read? **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God**

and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

The Greek word that may be translated as observe or keep is τηρέω (*tay-reh'-o*) means to guard (from loss or injury, properly, by keeping the eye upon), i.e. to note (a prophecy; figuratively, to fulfil a command). **(Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible 2017 edition)**

The implication is that we show our love for God through our observing, keeping, doing those things which He has commanded. We do not do these things for any other reason than to show our love. It is not a condition of salvation rather a demonstration of our love for God. We have the assurance that His commandments are not burdensome.

Third, we are told that whatever is born of God will overcome the world. **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.**

Overcoming the world is what Jesus spoke with His disciples about as He was preparing them for His crucifixion. Jesus knew how the events were to be played out in John the 16th chapter. He told His disciples that they could expect to endure tribulations. He then offers hope: **These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NASB)** We should note that having the peace offered by Jesus means that we must be in Jesus.

Paul underscores the importance of being in Jesus when he writes to the church in Ephesus. **For by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NASB)** That faith that leads us to salvation is the faith that allows us to overcome the world and all of its temptations. Jesus was born of God and overcame the world. Here, we are told that **whatever is born of God overcomes the world.**

Fourth, John asked a rhetorical question, **who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** Our belief in Jesus is crucial to our victory over the things of this world. Once more, we will look to the words of Jesus as He was preparing His disciples for the end of His earthly ministry. John records those words in the 14th chapter. **“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (John 14:18-20 NASB)** This is a clear, unequivocal statement that we will share in the victory over death by or through our being in Christ. Jesus tells us that if He is raised, we will be raised.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian church, is speaking about overcoming death through Jesus. Paul uses clear understandable words to say death has been defeated and is no longer a threat for those in Christ Jesus. Jesus has taken away the fear of death and replace it with the victory enjoyed by Jesus. **Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57 NASB)**

In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul tells us that the victory we have in Jesus extends to all levels. It is a victory over tribulation, sufferings, and even death.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37 NASB)

I love the way that passage ends, **we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.** This is the point that John is making in 1 John 5. The answer to John's question **who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** To overcome the world and gain the victory, we must be in Jesus Christ.

Fifth, we will conclude this passage by seeing that being in Christ Jesus is blessed and planned by the godhead. The very person who is in Christ and therefore the one who overcomes is **the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.**

Here, John tells us that Jesus came by water and blood. These are the elements through which we are born into Christ. It is easy for us to make the connection between blood and the crucifixion. What is the connection of water? Remember the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus? Jesus tells Nicodemus that we must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven. Nicodemus asked Jesus about this second birth. **Jesus answered, "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. (John 3:5-6 NASB)** Later, Jesus tells His disciples that they are to baptize other disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the agreement made in heaven. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in agreement and the three of them are one. On earth, the Holy Spirit (sent by Jesus) is in agreement that we are baptized (water) into the death (blood), burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus overcame the world. We too may overcome the world. We must be in Jesus. Paul tells the Galatians that we "put on Christ", literally we become dressed in Christ through baptism.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27 NASB)

This is not just getting wet but it involves uniting with Christ in the likeness of His death (Romans 6:3) and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It all ties together. The Unity of God's word leads us to becoming victorious in Christ Jesus. We, through His power and grace, overcome the world.