

## 1 John 5:1-5 “How to be an Overcomer”

7.26.17

As we begin tonight, I want you to think about a time in your life **where you overcame a huge obstacle** or a very difficult set of circumstances. Perhaps it was an event that occurred a long time ago. Or perhaps it happened just a few months ago. Perhaps it was a financial victory or even a sporting or academic accomplishment. Perhaps it was a great success in your company or within your family. Maybe it was a physical achievement in that you ran a marathon or even that you overcame something as serious and ominous as cancer. Ponder for a moment: **What has been your greatest achievement** where you’ve overcome a significant obstacle?

**As you ponder,** I’ll share this: I don’t know about you...but, life can be pretty overwhelming at times. Even as Christians it can seem that the obstacles are too large and that we’ve been brought to the **rim-edge** of our limit. I know from time to time that I’m pushed to the very edge of what I can handle and I’m not talking about anything necessarily massive like some sort of major battle...I’m talking about the cumulative effect of the **drip, drip, drip** of life where little things just build up and pop up and these daily mundane tasks of paying bills, and raising our families or just keeping the clothes washed seem to be almost more than we can handle. Well, tonight, I hope we’ll be encouraged as we read from 1 John 5 and see how the Apostle John describes **“How to be an Overcomer.”**

---

### 1 John 5:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup> For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

---

Now as we begin tonight, let me remind you that the Apostle John loves to **repeat and reiterate** himself in this short little epistle, because he desperately wants to make sure the dispersed Christians (under tremendous persecution) **UNDERSTAND** their **position in Christ** as born again believers. Remember the theme verse of the entire Epistle is:

### 1 John 5:13

<sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

---

Now, remember, these believers are those who are **living in eastern Asia Minor** because of the terrible **persecution** in Jerusalem and all of Israel after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD.



The map shows this area of Pamphilia, Pisidia, Galatia, Pontus and Cappadocia and some scholars believe that **perhaps** this *circular letter* was passed from church to church all the way to **western Asia Minor** and the 7 churches that John will eventually write to when he pens the last book of the NT: Revelation (Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Thyatira, Pergamum, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.) Bottom line: **These people need encouragement.** They are under such tremendous pressure in just trying to make a living and survive in such a hostile world.

**You know, we all need encouragement.** Never forget that church family. You don't know exactly what the **person sitting beside of you or behind you** is going through. It may be monumental. You see, we all need encouragement. **Life is hard.** Life is filled with pitfalls and problems and circumstances that make living in this sin-fallen world difficult **almost suffocating at times...**and that's why we need each other. (Pat the person beside of you and say, "I'm here for you.")

**Yes, we need encouragement and that's what John is seeking to offer.**

I love the title that John gave to us as believers in verses 4 and 5. He calls us: **Overcomers!** That's such a wonderful title for believers in Christ!

In fact as I thought about it...**there are many wonderful titles** in the New Testament for us as Christians. We are called **children**: *Like...* children of God, children of light, children of the day, and children of obedience. We are called **believers**, the faithful, and the friends of Christ. We are called brothers and sisters. We are called sheep, saints, holy ones and soldiers. We are called witnesses, stewards, fellow-citizens, lights in the world and the elect of God. We're called the **chosen, ambassadors for Christ, ministers, and servants.** We're called disciples, joint-heirs and branches of the vine. We're called members of the body, living stones, temples and the beloved. What **wonderful names** (titles), as children of God, we've been given!

It's a profound and powerful thing to consider the fact that it takes all of those titles to describe the depth and fullness of what it means to belong to Jesus Christ. We're so blessed to be part of the family of God!

***Well, let's consider now that wonderful title: OVERCOMER.*** This is such a descriptive term. In the Greek it can also mean VICTOR and WINNERS of a sporting event or battle.

---

Let me show you the actual Greek word for Overcomer:

**nikaō**

1. to conquer
  2. to be victorious
  3. of Christ, victorious over all His foes
  4. of Christians, that hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions
  5. when one is arraigned or goes to law, to win the case, maintain one's cause
- 

So, an overcomer is **Nikao**. What does that make you think of? Perhaps the use of the word in English as it used by this shoe company:

***Nike, means victory, winners, overcomers!***



Did you also know that the United States military has Nike Missiles? See the picture of some:



**Jesus** also used the word of Himself in John 16:33. See it...

**John 16:33**

***<sup>33</sup>I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."***

Jesus was saying: "I've won! I have defeated the world! I have conquered the kosmos...the evil system of the world! **Jesus is the victor!**"

---

**Let me show you** another one of my favorite uses of the word. It's found in Romans 8.

## **Romans 8:37**

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

---

Do you know what **form of the word** Nikao is used there?

### **hypernikao**

super-conqueror, ultimate conqueror, invincible, or unconquerable

---

**We are hypernikao! How so?** Well, look at verses 38 and 39 and you'll **see what we have overcome in Christ!**

## **Romans 8:38-39**

<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

---

You see, we are **super-conquerors**. We are the unconquerable. Because of Jesus, we are the overcomers!

**Now look back at 1 John 5:1** and let's watch the flow of this.... Once again, John is going to encourage these persecuted believers to rejoice in their salvation.

## **1 John 5:1**

<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

---

Here again is the mental understanding of salvation. Remember our little diagram...



**You believe the facts** about Jesus mentally in order to become a Christian. You must believe in Jesus Christ, and when you do, **you will OVERCOME** this world, just as He did. That's the same thing John is saying in **down in verse 5**.

## **1 John 5:5**

<sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

---

We overcome by believing in Jesus and believing means that you place your trust on Him (standing in the chair). **It is more than just mental ascent.** Truly, the simplest way to boil down this life is what you and I do with Jesus Christ...the author of life. To truly overcome you have to trust Jesus...who He is and what He did. **Your entire eternity depends on what you do with the supreme overcomer, Jesus Christ.**

---

You see, when you believe and you place your trust in Jesus, you become "born of God." Did you see that in verse 1?

---

## 1 John 5:1

<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

Being born of God doesn't mean that you joined a church or just prayed a prayer and checked off a little box on a card. It doesn't mean just following certain rituals. It literally means that you have been begotten (born) of God. God becomes your Father. Salvation then, is truly a miracle, to think that we can receive Christ and be born of God!

---

Now look at verse 2.

## 1 John 5:2

<sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

---

If you have believed in Jesus and have been BORN OF GOD, then you will show it by loving your brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember, we saw this in 1 John 3:11.

## 1 John 3:11

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

---

**Do you love people?** *It reminds me of the story I read where a man and his family came into a little town many years ago, and stopped at a little General Store and the man asked the old storeowner, "What kind of town do you have here?" The storekeeper answered, "Well, what kind of town did you come from?" The man replied, "It was a wonderful little town. Everybody there got along and really cared for each other. They were really wonderful people! And we REALLY hated to leave by I got a promotion...and well, here we are." The storekeeper looked at the man and said, "Young fella, you're in luck! We're the same kind of town you just left! You're gonna love it here!"*

*A little while another car pulled up in front of the same old store and a man got out and asked the same question: "What kind of town do you have here, sir?" The old storekeeper asked, "Well, what kind of town did you come from?" The man replied, "Well, to be honest with you...we were so glad to get out of that town, we couldn't leave fast enough! The people were so mean and hateful and nobody cared about anybody!" The storekeeper answered: "Well, we've got the same kind of town here. You won't find anything different here." The man got back into his car and drove off.*

*Well, two old fellas had been sitting out in front of that General Store playing checkers and they witnessed all of this and one of the men objected and spoke up and said to the storeowner: "Why did you give those two men two different viewpoints of our town?" And the storekeeper smiled and replied: "Well, I've learned that any town will be the same kind of town that you've just left, because you will be the same kind of person."*

---

**What kind of person are you?** Are you kind and loving and encouraging, or are you hateful, judgmental and mean? You'll tend run with the kind of person you are. You see, you'll typically find the same kind of people that you are yourself. Do you love others? You see, if we do...then we show we love the Lord...**AND** verse 2 says, we'll also obey His commandments.

### 1 John 5:2

<sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

---

Listen carefully, Church family, what I'm going to say to you cannot be repeated enough in our watered down obedience society. Righteousness should be the overwhelming characteristic and practice of our lives as Christians. Obedience to Jesus should be the norm, not the anomaly. Yes, we'll slip and fall from time to time, but the normal course of action for our lives should be obedience and a steady march in the direction of Jesus, not the world.

---

I said it this way in my devotion on Monday and I put it on Facebook:

**Those who say they love Jesus should be living a life that shows it. To say that you love Jesus, (we'll call that faith), and then NOT exhibit any evidence of that "profession of faith" is incongruent with a life that Scripture describes as regenerated (saved). It's very easy to say, "I love Jesus." Yet, those are simply words. It's quite another to live a life that gives evidence of that profession. Franklin Graham said recently: "The evangelical church today has grown all too accepting of sin. The church is ducking the vital moral issues of our age. Rather than influencing our culture by being Gospel salt and light, the church has itself become influenced by the permissive culture in which we live." Truly, faith without works is dead. ("So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James 2:17)**

---

Church, our works are as filthy rags...they won't save us... Salvation comes by faith, not works. But, once we're saved, it's our works that gives indication that our faith is not dead. **Look down at verse 3.**

### 1 John 5:3

<sup>3</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

---

That word BURDENSOME used there, means "not heavy."

Have you ever been carrying something that looks heavy to someone else and you say, "Oh no, it's not heavy!" It reminds me of an experience I had in Ethiopia. See this picture.



I asked through my translator, "Honey, is he heavy? She said, "No, he's my brother." I thought that was so sweet and beautiful! You see, there was no burden for that little girl because she loved what she was carrying...her brother.

---

**Church family, if we say that we love Jesus, it should be no burden to obey Him.** We'd say: "No, it's not heavy to obey Jesus, because I LOVE HIM!" Listen, after all, if we are yoked with Jesus, He said: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Yes, that scene with that little girl and her brother was common occurrence in Ethiopia.



BTW...Notice on top of the hut where the girl lived. That cross could have gotten her family killed, but they loved the Lord and were not afraid to let it be known. Most of the huts had the crescent moon and star...



That signified they were what? Muslims. **When you truly love Jesus, you're not afraid for the world to know it!**

---

You see, if I'm truly born of God and He's my Father, then keeping His commandments is not a problem for me. They're not heavy. The child of God TRULY wants to keep their Father's commandments. The child of God wants to please his Father. I know that from my own relationship with my own dad. Even as an almost 50-year-old, I still want to please my dad, so I obey him to this day. I want to make Him proud. How about your heavenly Father? Do you want to please Him and make Him proud of you?

I want to show you now, a summary of these 3 verses that I read by John MacArthur. This is brilliant:

**"We believe in Christ who is God. And that faith produces love and that love produces obedience. If I believe that Christ is who He says He is. And I believe Christ is exactly who the Scripture reveals Him to be, then He is going to draw out of my heart all my love and all my praise and all my adoration and all my interest and all my attention. And I'm going to be consumed with Him as the priority of my life. And I'm going to be consumed with the people He loves, because whoever He loves, I love. And the expression of that love is going to come in keeping His commandments. And they won't be burdensome, because true love for Christ is a rush of obedience that longs to please Him."** John MacArthur

---

So, I'll ask you. Is it burdensome for you to obey Jesus? Is it cramping your style? Do you find yourself struggling with the commands of Jesus to take up your cross and deny yourself? Do you struggle to walk the second mile and turn the other cheek? Do you struggle to obey Him? If you do, that's a problem, according to 1 John 5. But, if you love Jesus, you will overcome.

**Look at verse 4...**

## 1 John 5:4

<sup>4</sup>For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

---

Do you want to know how to be a winner...and overcomer and a super conqueror? You have to have faith! Faith in Jesus is the victory that overcomes the world, the world system and Satan, death, hell and the grave.

**Think about people who were overcomers in Scripture?** I think of Noah. He overcame all the naysayers and got his family on the ark...and to safety, and they overcame the flood. Moses led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and they escaped (overcame) the mighty Egyptian army. Queen Esther overcame the evil Haaman and his plot to kill all the Jews. Nehemiah overcame the enemies surrounding him as he rebuilt the broken down walls of Jerusalem. And Peter...oh Peter, he overcame even denying his Master, by coming back to Jesus. Do you need to come back to Jesus tonight? He's waiting and He'll make you an overcomer!

---

One of my favorite accounts in the Bible of someone who overcame was Joshua when he led the nation of Israel to conquer Jericho. (In fact, for those who go with me in November 2018 to Israel, we'll see the ruins of Jericho on our trip.) Here's a picture of part of that area where they have located where the walls once stood and ultimately were pancaked on top of each other below that fence line.



Do you remember how Joshua and the people overcame Jericho? Through fighting? No! FAITH. God told Joshua just march around the city for seven days!

**Can you imagine Joshua telling the fighting men that they're just going to march** around the city and shout! They'll never pulled a sword! In fact, it was the priests who led the people marching around Jericho for 7 days and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day they marched 7 times and then shouted. That sounds crazy doesn't it! You know the people of Jericho had to think they were nuts too! Watching all of this for a week! Joshua 6:20 records what happened:

---

## Joshua 6:20

<sup>20</sup>So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

---

Church family, it's "Faith in God" that conquers. Faith conquered the city of Jericho, not might. Not Joshua's military brilliance... Only God could get the credit.



Did you know that event is recorded in the “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11, where it says:

### **Hebrews 11:30**

<sup>30</sup>By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

---

I want to conclude tonight in the last book of the Bible.

Here’s the backdrop: This is it. The New Jerusalem is coming out of heaven and there’s a new heaven and a new earth and we’re finally in the presence of Jesus!

---

### **Revelation 21:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

<sup>5</sup>And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

---

Folks, we win! We are the victors! But until then, we’re going to still have to deal with problems, troubles, heartache, pain, misunderstandings and the drip, drip, drip of life. Yes, we’re going to have to love and forgive and deal with children who are struggling. We’re going to have to pay bills and **pray** for patience and for long suffering. We’re going to have to yoke up with Jesus and allow Jesus to take our burdens and carry us through the days and seasons of times that seem to be longer than our ability to endure. We’re going to have to trust our OVERCOMER...Jesus Christ... And remember these words:

### **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

<sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup>as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

---

See your life with heaven as the backdrop...see through the struggles...always with Jesus and His glory in the background and never, ever forget: We Nikao! We win!!!