



The Epistle of 1 John

“OVERCOMING THE WORLD”

1 John 5:4-5

Theme: It is the cultivation of a confidence in God’s commandments through faith that enables us to overcome the world.

I. The Preparation for Overcoming the World – *5:4a*

A. THE ISSUE MANDATING THAT WE OVERCOME THE WORLD

1. Three times in these two verses John mentions the idea of *“overcoming the world”* – it is imperative that we understand what we are supposed to be *“overcoming.”*
2. In the section immediately preceding this, we are told that *“this is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”*
3. Thus, *“the world”* then can be defined as whatever or whoever is able to make you feel God’s commandments are in any way grievous.
4. The natural disposition in you to count the commandments of God grievous is very strong – at times desiring to be independent of Him; free to choose for ourselves, instead of having Him choose what is right for us; free to do our own will and not His!
5. This disposition cannot be tolerated [it is too potent], shunned [it is too menacing], conciliated [it is too exclusive], or compromised [it is too demanding].
6. It must be *“overcome”* [ἰκάνω] – to surpass in ability, to outstrip; excel with superior power; to conquer.

B. THE INITIATION MOTIVATING US TO OVERCOME THE WORLD

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1. Thus, John declares: *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world”*
2. There is not ability to overcome the world before the transformation that occurs through the new birth – when we receive the power to be the sons of God – enjoying a “love relationship” with the Father.
3. When we are born again, we are a “new creation” – an essential alteration so that we are not the same people we were.
4. Because the insinuations of the world that the commandments of God are grievous fit so well into our own carnal dispositions, unless we stand in a filial relationship to God, and are possessed of a new frame of mind because of that relationship, having been begotten of Him, we cannot possibly hope to withstand the “love of the world.”

II. The Power in Overcoming the World – 5:4b

A. THE PERSPECTIVE THAT PLEASURES GOD

1. We are then given the key – *“... and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”*
2. Because we have been *“born of God,”* our consciences, being quickened by God’s Spirit, appreciate the goodness, rightness, and spiritual propriety in the commandments of God.
3. When the pride of your heart is broken through faith in Christ Jesus so that you do not chafe under the instructions of God, your faith has brought you to a place where you are able to be pleasing to God.

B. THE PRIORITY OF PLEASING GOD

1. Scripture teaches us that the presence of faith is necessary to please God – *Hebrews 11:6*

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2. Notice that it is not our new birth – in and of itself – that gives us the victory, but it is *“our faith.”*
3. The phrase here is important – *“this is the victory that has overcome the world ...”* – meaning that in the past, what has provided men with the ability to overcome the world is the faith in God – a faith devoted to pleasing Him by devotion to His Word and commandments.

III. The Practice of Overcoming the World – 5:5

A. THE CONSTANCY OF OUR FAITH IN CHRIST

1. He now focuses his attention on the current situation and asks: *“Who is the one who overcomes the world [now] but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*
2. This is not referring to a faith that focuses on a past event – when a change in our spiritual condition was accomplished, but on a present object; not looking back or looking in, but looking out: *“looking unto Jesus”* in a current activity!
3. As we are enthralled with the delights of our Lord Christ, we are able to daily, regularly beat back the attempts of the world to see His authority in our lives become grievous.

B. THE CONFORMITY TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

1. As we fix our gaze on Him and love Him, we are conformed to His image, making any resentments of His instruction even more remote.
2. In Jesus Christ, we find the perfect example of One who never could be accused or even suspected that there was the faintest shadow of resentment of the Father’s orders and commandments.
3. His confidence in the goodness of the Father was so perfect that there were no vulnerabilities where Jesus

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felt the Father's commandments were grievous.

4. We must grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ through a constant emphasis on our *“belief that Jesus is the Son of God”* if we will know victory over the world.