

# So That You May Know

## An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:1-5**

### Chapter 25- Overcoming the World

#### 220 Overcoming the World- Part 4

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WAOY Tuesday 07/15/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1 John**, and today we're going to continue to look at what John meant when he said, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world". So, let's read **1John 5:1- 5** again together:

**1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.**

**2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.**

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

**4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.**

**5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

Now as we look again at this great passage taught by the Apostle John- I want to once again draw your attention to the link that John made between obedience and overcoming. And I want to look at this link rightly. And please allow me to tell you what I am talking about.

It is commonly taught today that we have to "take the first step" and then God will do all the rest. That we must make the first move or in other words- we must initiate action on our part- before God will do anything. And that teaching is the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches and is an affront to what Grace is all about.

And in the context of this Passage- many teach that we must obey- and then by and through our obedience- we will build *ourselves* up to the point where we then become overcomers. And these teachers would

define “overcoming” with always being healed or always getting that new job or always being delivered from trouble and walking around with an effervescent attitude. This kind of teaching has much more to do with getting psychologically “pumped up” than it does with true, Biblical Faith.

What we must acknowledge, dear friends is that it is *not* always God’s Will to heal those who are sick. It is *not* always God’s Will to deliver His children from problems down here on earth. The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that sometimes it is God’s Will to allow His people to suffer and not be rescued from that suffering.

And the answer as to why God would do that has nothing to do with how much or how little faith the person had. It has nothing to do with that suffering saint being punished for some previous sin. It has to do with God’s Will and even though many people will want to argue about this issue- the Bible is crystal clear that this is the way it is.

The mystery of suffering is that even in our pain- God is absolutely Sovereign. And even when things go horribly wrong- God is still faithful. And so the difference as to why some are healed and others are not is God’s business- not ours. And we are told over and over in Scripture to trust that even when it doesn’t look like it- that our suffering has purpose and meaning and it is not haphazard and it is not arbitrary and that God is in charge of every single portion of our lives- even our tragedies- and that God is so superior and so majestic that He takes the evil with the wonderful and somehow works it all together for the ultimate good.

And that is why the Bible teaches that chastisement is *not* designed to destroy us- but is a manifestation of God’s Love. Because God is *infinitely* more interested in us being holy than He is in us being temporarily happy. And Jesus taught in **John 15** that God only prunes the branches that are already bearing good and godly fruit. And He prunes us so that we will bear even more fruit.

Faith is being taught in far too many places today as being nothing more than a tool that we can use to get what we want out of God. So faith is being portrayed as a “spiritual crowbar” that we can use to pry old God out of His chair so that He will do for us whatever we can imagine in our carnal thoughts. And some of the most famous television preachers are promoting a concept that God’s people should learn how to manipulate God to fulfill our lusts. And they will be happy

to teach us how to do that.

Pleased allow me to tell you that what these pied pipers are teaching is little more than an attempt at sanctifying covetousness and a love for money and material goods. And so I will be faithful to tell you that all such teaching is a perversion of what true faith is. Faith is not something that is an isolated entity. In the Bible- faith is always attached to Jesus Christ. For example- when John says here in the last part of verse 4:

**... and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.**

... he is talking about the Christian faith as opposed to the other faiths that were circulating around the world at the time that John wrote this Epistle. He was not talking about the personal faith of individual believers. Beloved, we have overcome the world by being saved and by sharing in Christ's Victory over sin, hell, and death. And to *marginalize* that glorious Victory by attaching it to somebody who wants to drive around in a nicer car or live in a bigger house- is blasphemy.

We need to remember that before Christ found us- we were wicked sinners who were headed straight to hell and even though he certainly didn't have to do it- Jesus Christ mercifully rescued us and forgave us and guaranteed that we will go to heaven. And that is the greatest news is all the world.

So contrary to what some popular motivational speakers say- this down here is *not* our "best life now". The only way that this life is going to be your best life now is if you are lost and if you are going to spend eternity in the lake of fire- without any hope and without any future. Then and only then could we say with any degree of truthfulness that this life here on earth was our best life.

But if we are saved- we cannot even begin to imagine how wonderful and how glorious and how amazing life will be in Heaven. Heaven in all its glory will make everything beautiful in this life to look hideous by comparison. We need to understand that Christianity is *not* about making earth to be like Heaven. It is about making sinful unworthy vessels *fit* for Heaven. And genuine faith is not about changing the dynamics of a fallen world into being a world without sin or trouble. It is about living in this sinful world without being a part of

this world. It is about occupying without partaking; it is about not being overcome with evil but overcoming evil with good.

So rather than a strong healthy body or a huge bank account or a nice lear jet or a nice silk suite- true faith produces the kind of results that Jesus taught about in **Matthew 5:43-47** when He said:

**43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'**

**44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

**45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.**

**46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?**

**47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?**

**48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Here Jesus gave us an example of what true faith and righteousness and Christianity looks like. This is the fruit of being empowered by God the Holy Spirit. And please notice that Jesus never said that true faith was the absence of problems- because Jesus Himself guaranteed that we would have serious problems here on the earth. But true genuine, Biblical faith will empower us to handle those problems and those injustices and those bearings and those persecutions *differently* than lost pagans would. As believers- we will walk through these difficult times responding as Jesus Himself would respond.

The Apostle Paul also taught about what genuine overcoming through faith looked like in **2Corinthians 6:4-10**, so let's read that passage together:

**4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,**

**5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

**6** in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,  
**7** in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,  
**8** by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;  
**9** as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,  
**10** as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

It is nothing less than the height of arrogance that we would think that because we are saved that God somehow loves us more than He loves the millions of believers who right this minute are suffering in unbelievable torment. Just who do we think we are that we would think that God owes us a nicer life here in America when precious and faithful believers all over the world have never known five minutes of a good life- and yet they are as equally saved as we are. What kind of self-righteousness is it for American believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to honestly think that faith will bring us a better life while 2/3 of the world's Christians are in unthinkable persecutions? Truly we need to ratchet this thing down a few notches and serve ourselves a big slice of humble pie.

Now I suppose that the best example of faith can be found in **Hebrews 11**. Here we have what is called the "Hall of Faith"- great people who trusted God. And the writer of **Hebrews** uses these people as examples to show us just what real faith and real overcoming looks like. And just a few verses before Chapter 11- this writer gives us one of the most amazing examples of this when he wrote in **Hebrews 10** that some Christians were imprisoned and the others had made the hard decision to identify with them and risk their personal property as well as their own lives. And Verse 34 tells what happened.

**For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**

Now this is the kind of radical, risk- taking, faith- filled life that

the entire Bible is trying to produce in us- a life that looks at the high price of Love (like the seizure of your property) and then accepts that situation *joyfully*. This is the kind of life that actually does what Love demands- no matter what the consequences are. And that is an example of the abundant life of faith that overcomes that John is talking about.

And what **Hebrews 10:34** makes clear is that the way that such a life comes about in our lives- through an unshakable Hope in God that is beyond anything in this life. The writer of **Hebrews** said that these people:

**... accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**

So, the power to be joyfully sacrificial in the path of Love is **knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**

And *this* is what John means in **1John 5** when he talks about overcoming the world. And that's what true faith is all about. It is meant to deepen our confidence in God's Promises to the extent that we will overcome the fleeting pleasures of sin and live out the radical kind of Love that comes from having our Hope in God.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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