

Overcoming the World

I John Series

I Jn 5:1-4

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INTRODUCTION

A. On just about any given day, if you were to observe the life of just about any Christian, you might be tempted to wonder whether they were winning or losing the battle of life

1. If we're honest, we have to admit that Christians have their share of hard times
2. Sometimes, in an effort to win people to Christ, the gospel message sounds like a promise to remove all problems, head off failure before it happens, and eliminate all the negatives from life
3. The only problem with that view is that it's not true – it's a badly distorted gospel

B. Consider Jesus, for just a moment, and you'll understand the point

1. John 16:33 -- "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." NASB95
2. I want you to think about this statement for just a minute
 - a. it was made before Judas betrayed him
 - b. it was made before he was arrested and tried as a blasphemer
 - c. it was made before he was ridiculed, beaten and spat upon
 - d. it was made before the authorities executed him by crucifixion
3. If you just look at things from their normal appearance, it doesn't look like Jesus was much of a winner at all

C. Still, we have John, decades after Jesus lived on the earth, making a startling claim on behalf of people who put their faith in Jesus

1. I John 5:1-4
2. John is making a claim to victory – to having overcome the world
3. How can this be true?

D. This is the subject of today's lesson – overcoming the world

I. THE MISGUIDED QUEST FOR FAITH

A. A great many people, in one way or another, have expressed the desire to have faith

1. There have been those who are not believers who have said they wished they could believe
 - a. maybe it was because they were impressed by the faith of someone they knew
 - b. maybe there was something in the way a person handled the stresses of life that made them aware of an inner strength they did not possess
2. Some are like the father of the demon possessed boy in John 9:24 – “I do believe, help my unbelief”
 - a. here was a man who believed Jesus could help his son
 - b. he was also a man who understood the limitations of his faith
 - c. there are many people like this – they have a whisper of faith, but they know that a deep, confident, working faith is missing

B. Unfortunately, this is where many people miss what Christian faith is all about

1. What they want is some sort of subjective experience – a “feel good” opportunity that in some manner outweighs the stress, or the pain, or the suffering, or whatever it is they are facing in life
2. Many people are not concerned about the content of their faith, or the object of their faith – they think that by having “something” to believe in they will overcome their world and become winners
3. They are of the opinion that having some emotional experience will give their lives meaning and purpose, and help them find answers to rise above all their problems
4. That’s why you’ll hear things like this:
 - a. I don’t know about you, but this is true for me
 - b. I’ve had an experience, and that has validated what I believe to be true
 - c. What is true for one person isn’t necessarily true for another, so we must each find that which speaks to our own lives – in essence, we must find our own truth

C. We’re left with a mish-mash and a hodge-podge of nothingness, and then we can’t figure out why this overcoming the world business is so difficult

1. Back to John 16:33 for a minute – the reason Jesus could make the statement that he had overcome the world is not because of his subjective experiences, and not because there was something true for him but not for others
2. He made that statement because he knew the objective outcome of his life and death, that he would rise from the dead, and that the very things the world threw at him were the very things by which he would become victorious
3. It is out of the background of the historical, factual Jesus that John speaks of overcoming the world

II. THE FAITH JOHN SPOKE ABOUT IS AN OBJECTIVE FAITH

A. Pay attention to what John actually said

1. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God
2. Whatever is born of God overcomes the world
3. It is the believer in Jesus as the Christ who has overcome the world
4. For John, it is very important that his readers put their faith in the right object

B. Little wonder John writes this way, for in the gospel of John, Jesus is recorded as putting the focus on himself – we are to believe in him

1. John 6:35 -- Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. NASB95
2. John 7:38 -- "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' " NASB95
3. John 11:25-26 -- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" NASB95
4. John 12:44-46 -- And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. NASB95
5. John 14:12 -- "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father. NASB95
6. John 17:20-21 -- "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. NASB95

C. Faith is NOT:

1. In ourselves
2. In our emotional experiences
3. In our personally acceptable or desirable set of truths
4. In the church

D. Faith is a belief and trust in Jesus Christ

1. I John 1:1-3 -- What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also NASB95

2. I John 1:7 -- but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. NASB95
3. I John 2:1-2 -- My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. NASB95
4. I John 2:22-24 -- Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. NASB95
5. I John 3:23 -- This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. NASB95
6. I John 4:2 -- By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; NASB95
7. I John 4:9 -- By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. NASB95

III. THAT FAITH PROVIDES VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

A. Faith protects us from the influences of the world

1. Against worldly values and motivations
2. Against fascinations with things that will ultimately harm us
3. Against human philosophies, traditions, and ways of living that are opposed to God
4. It is easier to resist all these things when you believe in, and trust Jesus Christ

B. Faith provides the strength we need to stand against the attacks of the world

1. Don't be fooled – we are attacked every day by things designed to destroy us
2. Sorrows, sufferings and questions of life are powerful enemies that rob us of life itself
3. Failure, disappointment and frustrations are things that cripple our spirits and kill our souls
4. Rejection, conflicts and animosities make it difficult to live with others
5. But, when you believe in the Christ who endured all these things, went to the cross, died to redeem us from every enemy, and rose to give us hope of eternal life, we can endure

C. Faith provides hope for the ultimate in victories

1. 2 Peter 3:10-13 -- But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. NASB95

2. 1 John 2:16-17 -- 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. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. NASB95

CONCLUSION

A. Illustration

Lyle Arakaki shares this insight: In Hawaii, because of the time difference with the continental U.S., the NFL Monday Night Football game is played in mid-afternoon, so the local TV station delays its telecast until 6:30 in the evening. When my favorite team plays, I'm too excited to wait for television, so I'll listen to the game on the radio, which broadcasts it live. Then, because they're my favorite team, I'll watch the game on television, too.

If I know my team has won the game, it influences how I watch it on television. If my team fumbles the ball or throws an interception, it's not a problem. I think, *That's bad, but it's okay. In the end, we'll win!*

-- Leadership Magazine, Fresh Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching.

B. If you keep looking to yourself, you won't know the score, but if you look to Jesus, you know That the victory is already won

C. Conclusion