

Overcomer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 February 2024

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] 1 John 5, verses 1-5, if you would stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together.

! 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. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments.

For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world.

For who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word.

Would you please be seated? Well, the Chiefs are headed back to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in five years, and statistically speaking, this is the worst Chiefs team to make it to the Super Bowl.

[1 : 33] Patrick Mahomes threw more interceptions than he ever has before in his career. The Chiefs finished with an 11-6 record, which gave them the three seed, which meant for the very first time they would have to play playoff games on the road.

Amongst hostile crowds who were tired of seeing the Chiefs win, tired of seeing the Chiefs go to the Super Bowl, tired of seeing their players in all of those commercials, and tired of the camera cutting away from the action on the field to Taylor Swift in some luxury suite up high.

And I'm tired of that too. But after the AFC and NFC championship games, the players were questioned by reporters.

And when it came to the Chiefs, a lot of the questions were about how much they had overcome to get to the point where they were at. On the other side of things, the 49ers quarterback, Brock Purdy, who was the last player chosen in the 2022 NFL draft, fielded questions about how much he personally had overcome to lead his team to the Super Bowl and how he authored that comeback victory over the Lions.

And in his post-game interview, before answering any questions, Brock Purdy said, first of all, all glory to God. Likewise, Clark Hunt, the owner of the Kansas City Chiefs, first thing he said when he received the trophy for winning the conference championship was, first of all, I want to give God the glory.

[3 : 14] Now, if you're a sports fan, you've heard owners, you've heard coaches, you've heard athletes who say similar things after winning a big game or receiving a trophy or an award.

And as Christians, we appreciate that. And I don't mean to criticize those men or the genuineness of their faith and their courage to give God the glory in those moments, especially when they use the name of Jesus.

But I think we'd all agree it's easier to give God the glory and feel like an overcomer when things are going well, when we feel like we are winning or have won.

And I think that the secular media and unbelievers sort of expect those who confess to be a follower of Christ to give him some kind of thanks whenever they win.

Now, I came across an interesting article this week on a sports website. This is not a Christian website. But it had a headline that piqued my interest in which I read.

[4 : 28] The headline said, Even in bitter defeat, John Harbaugh hangs his hat on words out of the Bible. John Harbaugh is the head coach of the Baltimore Ravens, the team the Chiefs beat to get to the Super Bowl.

And the Ravens were the favorite in that game. They'd been the favorite all season long. They looked like and had played like the best team in the NFL, which made their defeat even more disappointing and heartbreaking for their coaches, their players, and their fans.

The article begins like this. John Harbaugh lost his AFC championship game. And when he came out to meet reporters to explain why it happened and how he felt about it, this is the first thing he said before a question was asked.

I'm quoting Harbaugh here. This is where I'm hanging my hat at this point. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not harm you.

Plans to give you hope and a future. Wait for the Lord and be strong. He's quoting Jeremiah 29, 11. Now, we could put on our biblical scholar robes, and we could wag our hermeneutical finger and look down our theological noses at Harbaugh for quoting a passage from Jeremiah that was originally intended for the nation of Israel.

[5 : 56] Or, like the author of this article, we can be thankful for Harbaugh's testimony and reminder that whether we win or lose down here, God remains on his throne up there.

And the author continued, he said, I bring this all up.

Not to brag on the Chiefs or because I like to talk about sports, but because I think as Christians, it seems like, it feels like, we are losing and Satan is winning.

There is much for us to be disappointed about. We live in a culture that Romans 1, 16 through 32 describes. A culture that has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, resulting in the pursuit of sinful passions and people possessing a debased mind, calling what God says is good evil and what God says is evil good.

Adding to the disappointment, frustration, and feeling that we're losing are the people who are Christians. Pastors, preachers, teachers, who should be unwavering in their proclamation of God's word, but who are capitulating to our culture and encouraging Christians to lower their standards to appease the world.

[7 : 56] The churches John wrote to knew disappointment. They were well acquainted with the feeling of losing to culture, losing to the world.

False teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, had slipped into their churches, preaching a different gospel, leading many astray as they deserted the church, the truth, the faith that they once confessed.

John wrote this letter to remind the churches, to remind those who remained of the truth of the gospel. He writes to give assurance to those who have stayed by calling them to examine the genuineness of their faith.

And now in chapter 5, verses 1 through 5, he assures those who have passed the examination with another important reminder, and that's the main idea for this morning's sermon.

Those who believe in Christ overcome the world. Those who believe in Christ overcome the world. Church, Satan has won many battles, and he's going to win some more.

[9 : 12] And I'm sure that you, like me, have lost a lot of, or many skirmishes to him as you've succumbed to temptation.

Have you been enticed by the allurements of this world and you've fallen into sin? All this disappointment, both externally in what we see happening in our culture and internally as we wrestle with sin, can make us feel like losers.

It can make you think that collectively we are losing. We are losers. And as the losses pile up, we are tempted to lose hope.

But we have a truth that we can more than hang our hat on. We have a truth that we lay our entire lives on, our existences on.

That truth is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come and he has won. When Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room, he informed them that one of them was a traitor, that soon he was going to depart from them, that the hour of his death was fast approaching, and that when it came, all of his disciples would scatter from him, leaving him alone to face the cross.

[10 : 44] And in that moment, as he hung naked, bleeding, and dying on the cross, it would look like, it would seem like, it would feel like, he was losing.

But on the cross, Jesus was not losing. Jesus was winning. When he mustered what little strength he had left in his beaten body, lifting himself up from his nail-pierced feet, filling his lungs with air so he could shout one final time, it is finished.

That was not a statement acknowledging defeat. That was a shout of victory. The wrath of God had been satisfied.

Jesus atoned. Jesus fulfilled his mission. The entire work of redemption had been brought to completion. Jesus won.

Just as he knew that he would. Just as he said that he would. Going back into the upper room with the disciples before the cross, he said to them in John 16, 32 through 33, Behold, the hour is coming.

[11 : 59] Indeed, it has come. When you will be scattered each to his own home and will leave me alone, yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. 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. And three days later, after Jesus' death, he came back to life, proving, without a doubt, that he had won, that he had overcome the world, that he had overcome Satan, that he had overcome death, that he had overcome our sin, and that those who believe in him share in his victory and will overcome in Jesus Christ who overcame for us.

and as he's done throughout this letter, John once again calls his readers to examine themselves, to test the truth of their salvation in the hope that they will be reassured that in Christ they have overcome.

In our text today, John gives us three marks or three characteristics of those who truly believe in Christ and overcome the world. And so as we go through these things, I want you to ask yourself, do these marks, do these characteristics describe you?

And if so, rejoice. But if not, you need to repent and you need to know the truth and trust that Jesus Christ is the one who he said he was, who overcame Satan, sin, and death.

[13 : 39] And I pray that all of us would leave knowing today or being reminded today that Jesus has won and in Jesus we overcome. So the first mark of an overcomer is that overcomers are marked by their faith.

They're marked by their faith. In verse one, the beginning of verse one again, John says, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Now in the Greek, Christ is the equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah.

And we should understand that this abbreviated statement includes all of the truths about Jesus that John has already shared to this point. That Jesus is the son of God, he's the second person of the Trinity, he came to earth to die and rose again, accomplishing salvation for sinners.

It is the one who believes these truths about him that is born again, that has been truly saved. Now John writes the verb believes in the present tense.

And in the Greek, born again is one word written in the perfect tense. So the opening phrase of verse one in English could be read like this.

[15 : 01] Everyone believing presently that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Now these verbs have important theological significance.

The person who is truly born again is the person who continually believes. In other words, God saves you, he keeps you saved.

Permanently. There is no such thing as a unbelieving believer. Nor is there such a thing as losing your salvation.

Because as it pertains to salvation, people cannot lose what they never had to begin with. Now I say that and you might be thinking, well what about a person who professed faith in Christ but then at some point in time they stopped believing?

Well Jesus described such people in his parable of the soils in Matthew chapter 13 verses 5 through 7. Jesus said other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil.

[16 : 17] But when the sun rose they were scorched and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns and thorns grew up and choked them out. And then in verses 20 through 22 he explains as for what was sown on rocky ground this is the one who hears the word the gospel and immediately receives it with joy.

Yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word immediately he falls away he does not overcome. As for what was sown among thorns this is the one who hears the word but the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches

choke the word out and it proves unfruitful.

Again one who does not overcome. Earlier in this letter John explained that those who deserted the churches that he was writing to those who permanently fell away from the faith they once confessed did so because they were never truly saved in the first place.

He says in 1 John 2:19 they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that it might become plain that they are not all of us. saving faith is more than intellectual knowledge it's more than belief than a higher in a higher power the big man upstairs the object of saving faith is Jesus Christ and all that the Bible says that he is the eternal word of God the son of God who became flesh the God man the sinless savior our atoning sacrifice and risen Lord whom we obey.

[18:14] Now if you go down to verse 4 John says for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith.

Now overcome is the English translation of the Greek word *nikao* the word means to conquer to gain victory or to defeat Nike was the Greek goddess of victory who aided Zeus in his battle against the Titans and the Greeks believed that ultimate victory could not be achieved by mortals but only by the immortal gods that they worshipped but here John assigns that kind of ultimate immortal victory to Christians through their faith in Jesus Christ and so we need to understand here before we continue on how John how the Bible defines faith and in Hebrews 11:1 we have a great definition of what faith is now faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen and then from there the author of Hebrews runs through a list of people in the Old Testament who had faith in God's word they had faith in what God had promised they trusted that what he said would come to pass and the only evidence they had for that faith in God was God's trustworthiness their conviction that God does what God says he will do the people listed in Hebrews 11 faced obstacles that challenged their faith but despite those obstacles their faith in God caused them to act Noah was told to build an ark and he did Abraham was told to go away from his home not knowing where he was going and he left later he was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac which he was willing to do trusting that God would provide which he did Moses his parents hid him in civil disobedience to

Pharaoh's edict to exterminate male Hebrew infants his mother put him in a basket and sent him down the Nile trusting that God would deliver him safely and he did later Moses returned to Egypt after running away as a fugitive and he was sent to deliver God's people from slavery though he was keenly aware of his inability to do that he trusted in God's promises he trusted in God's power to accomplish what he could never do on his own and God did by faith the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land and that's just two books of the Bible that's just two I could go on like the author of Hebrews does in chapter 11 we could talk about Esther and Ruth and Rahab and Samson and David and the prophets our Bible is full of examples of people who faced trials but the trial that they faced as great as it was as much distress as it caused them and others in the moment it did not overcome their faith in

God and the author of Hebrews concludes that chapter of the faithful saying in verses 39 through 40 and all these though commended through their faith did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect all the people I mentioned that this chapter in Hebrews mentions lived prior to the coming of Jesus Christ the promised son of God that promise was not fulfilled in their time but they trusted in it we live on the other side of that promise we have received something better so if their faith caused them to overcome on that side of the cross how much more so should our faith on this side of the cross move us to be people of faith like them in ways that demonstrate that in

[22:55] Christ we've overcome I've never seen Jesus physically none of us have but I experienced the new birth salvation when I was eight years old and though I've stumbled I've sinned I've questioned I'm certain that the faith in Christ I professed 33 years ago is the same faith that I have today whatever fears whatever doubts whatever discouragements whatever difficulties I've overcome over that time I know that truly it was God's doing I know that the Jesus I have not seen is alive and

I know that he is alive in my heart because I have the indwelling of his spirit which I received on the day he graciously saved me and little by little he has been at work in my life continually revealing to me that Jesus is better Jesus is superior Jesus hasn't made a difference in my life Jesus has made the difference in my life he is my life and I know on the day or a time is coming when my faith will

turn to sight every time in every obstacle in every season of distress through the losses and the suffering I have an ever present reminder of my ever present savior and I take heart because my savior my lord my god my Jesus he has overcome satan he's overcome my sin he's overcome death he's overcome this world and for me there is no one else to turn to there is no one else to go to there is no better hope in this world this world has nothing to offer me that is better than what I've received through faith in Jesus Christ and so John in verse 5 asks rhetorically who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God Christians are victorious overcomers from the moment of their salvation when they were granted faith and a faith that embraced the gospel then and continues to embrace the gospel throughout their lives you may experience times of doubt like

David I'm sure that you've had moments where in Psalm 13 1 through 2 he cries out to God how long oh Lord will you forget me forever how long will you hide your face from me how long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day how long shall my enemy be exalted over me in other words he's saying God when am I going to stop losing but if you have true saving faith like David at the end of that psalm the Holy Spirit will remind you of what is true of the the certainty of your faith that God has caused you to embrace and then in verse five you'll say with him but I have trusted in your steadfast love my heart shall rejoice in your salvation I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me the things of this world may tempt us and challenge our faith but the true follower of

Jesus Christ will not be overcome by any of those things in fact if anything they increase our faith don't they as was the case for the apostle Paul he writes in 2 Corinthians 4 7 through 10 but we have this treasure!

[27 : 45] So now as it pertains to you is the faith that you confessed at the beginning still with you today and hopefully it's yes and hopefully you have known it or seen it to grow in your life is your faith founded on Jesus Christ the son of God if so take heart you have been made to share in his victory you by his doing and by his power overcome the world

John Piper said faith sees that Jesus is better that is why faith conquers the world the world held us in bondage by the power of its desires but now our eyes have been opened by the new birth to see the superior desirability of Jesus Jesus is better than the desires of the flesh and better than the desires of the eye and better than the riches that strangle us with greed and pride overcomers are marked by their faith and secondly overcomers are marked by their love overcomers are marked by their love second part of verse one and everyone who loves the father loves whoever has been born of God now last week I went into depth on this and so I'm not going to do so this week but John once again his point is very clear cannot be misunderstood his point is that you cannot truly love

God and hate his children you cannot truly love Jesus and hate his bride the church you cannot truly love the Lord and not love those whom he has made to likewise share in his victory you know maybe you grew up with a sibling or more than one and at some point you were fighting and you were just so tired of them and you said to them something like you know what I wish you had never been born and that grieved your parents to hear it now listen if you don't love those whom God loves isn't that what you're saying in your heart about them I wish love love love love love love! love is a love of choice a love that chose to sacrifice for those who did not love him first if you've received such love how can you choose not to show the same love and love in the same way as God we bear with one another we bear one another's burdens and we choose to because we have come to know the great love of God and his choosing to love sinners like us overcomers are marked by their faith their love and then thirdly I already gave it to you their obedience if you're paying attention you heard it their obedience in verse two by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commands and this verse obey once again it's written in the present tense which indicates continual habitual action those who are saved are transformed and their lives bear fruit as a result of that as a result of their obedience to do

God's word I think it's interesting here that once again John uses the command to love the children of God as evidence of someone who truly keeps God's commands and I think that he does that because of how hard it can be for us to love one another to resolve the conflicts that we have with one another when someone does something you don't like or says something that hurts your feelings or sins against you in some way often times our first thought isn't to follow through with Jesus command to go to that person one on one to try to resolve that conflict instead what we do is

we vilify that person in our minds!

[33 : 02] Thinking things about them assuming things about them that we don't know to be true and condemning them in our heart instead of going to them one on one as Jesus commanded us to do in Matthew 18 most of us would rather avoid conflict and thus we avoid the possibility of there being any kind of resolution that creates divisions and divisions create factions remember what John said right before our passage this morning in chapter 4 verse 21 and this commandment we have from him whoever loves God must also love his brother it's not optional again his logic is plain how can you love God and disobey his command to love his children you can't you can't if

God is your first love you will keep his commandments and your love for him your desire to obey him should motivate you then to choose to love those whom he has chosen to love in Matthew 7 12 Jesus on preaching the sermon on the mount he said so whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them for this is the law and the prophets this is the summary he says of God's word this command is known as the golden rule and you know versions of that rule existed before Jesus time when he preached that message both in the tradition of the rabbis and in Hinduism and Buddhism but all three of those groups they issued this command in a negative sense so they would say their version of the golden rule sounded something like this whatever is hateful to yourself do not do to someone else so you see

Jesus spends it in a positive way this is a positive command it's not just what you don't do to others but the effort you take in doing good to others it's obeying God's commands many of which relate to our relationships to one another it's seeing someone in need and coming to their aid it's seeing someone in sin and speaking the truth in love to them it's looking out for more than your good but looking to how you can serve others for their good for God's glory for the good of his church and most importantly it's pointing people to Jesus it's pointing people to Jesus it's pointing them to his word it's loving them in the truth and in the light of God's word in verse three

John says for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome and the key word here in this verse to me is keep this is another present active verb and it has the connotation of treasuring or guarding and it makes me whenever I see that word it always makes me think of my uncle and his Studebakers many of you guys know the Studebakers the old classic cars and he had three or four of these cars and he was retired and they were in pristine condition I mean they looked like they had just come off the lot and these cars were 50 or more years old and he would be out there cleaning them and waxing them and following us kids around whenever we would touch one to rub off our fingerprints off of it he treasured those things and it wasn't a burden for him to do all of that he enjoyed it he enjoyed preserving those cars now think of us as

Christians those are material possessions we have the word of God we have the word of life we have his commands we know the truth how much more so should we treasure and guard and keep his word which will never pass away or fade how much more so should we be devoted in our obedience how much more so should we desire to obey God's command and live a holy life now when it comes to the holy life I like what John Owen said he said a holy life does not exclude temptations when we say a tree is firmly!

[37 : 56] rooted we do not say that the wind never blows upon it Jesus talked about the wind blowing upon us didn't he in Matthew chapter 7 Jesus used an illustration to talk about to define to illustrate what it means for us what it looks like for the person who's committed to obey his words again the sermon on the mount he said everyone who then hears these words and it's not enough just to hear these words of mine underline I think the next point and does them and does them he will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock now listen to this and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it because it had no foundation in

Jesus Christ and the faith that not only believes but the faith the true faith that does so how should we adjust our lives according to what we've seen in God's word I think it's that live like an overcomer live like an overcomer in other words be who God has made you to be in 1 John 2 15 through 17 he said do not love the world or the things in the world if anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him for all that is in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the

eyes and pride of life is not from the father but is from the world and the world is passing away along with what it desires you don't have to succumb to the desires of your flesh you don't have to give in to whatever sin you are struggling with

Christian you do not have to look at the world and all the other things that people have that you don't have and you don't have to think my life lacks fulfillment unless I have that too you don't have to in Christ those chains have been broken in Christ in the Holy Spirit you have new desires and you can see those things and you should know nope in Jesus I have all that I need I don't need any of these things to make me feel better about myself!

or to make overcome and live like that live like that live boldly live courageously you know what I couldn't help but think as I was studying for this passage that people in this world people who belong to this world system they're more bold in what they believe and unbelievers are more bold in what they believe it seems to me they're more bold in their unbelief than Christians are in what they believe and that needs to change it may seem like the battle is being lost and we can know and I hope you know with certainty in Christ the victory has been won but that doesn't excuse your not being engaged in the battle putting sin to death in your own life and exposing sin out in this world with the word of

God we need bold Christians we need Christians who know the Bible we need Christians who don't just talk but who walk we need Christians who aren't afraid to stand up to this world and say no we need Christians who aren't afraid in the church to say we're not having any of that here we know the truth we've been set free by that truth we have overcome in Christ in victory and we're not going to let any of that garbage infiltrate this place God's house his body in Christ we overcome if you know Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior understand what John says it's not just a matter of when it's now you have overcome the world live like it act like it talk like it and give God the glory as you do if you don't know him you have not overcome this world and you will not overcome

[43 : 33] Satan you will not overcome your sin and! power you that to you this morning let's pray Lord you have given us countless examples people in the past people in the more recent past people in the present God who had faith in you that was unmovable unshakable and as a result of that faith

Lord you blessed it in ways that caused the world's eyes to see that what we believe as Christians is not just a bunch of wishful thinking but it's true it's real so God I pray for each one of us Lord you know us all by name you know all of the challenges that we faced this week that we're currently facing that we will face Holy Spirit I pray for all of us that you would remind us of the truth that we've just gone through this morning that in you Lord we have nothing to fear in you Lord we have no reason to act like cowards Lord in you we have overcome and God that's a wonderful thing may it be something that we're never ashamed!

of God this is a world our nation we pray that Lord it would be turned around and we know that if that's going to happen Lord it's got to start with us there's got to be revivals in each one of our own lives to trust that your words your commands are better not burdensome that they protect us that they heal us that they help us that there's blessing in being obedient to you and that in ways that would open the eyes of this world to see that Christians mean what they say they practice what they preach and in doing so Lord I pray that they would see the hope that we have in Christ your son our faith and that you would make them to be overcomers in his victory as well in Jesus name we pray! Amen! Amen!