

Victory

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Date: 27 February 2022

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[0 : 00] So our passage today is from the letter of 1 John, and it's really perfect timing, I think, for this message.

You all are going through the book of John in your Sunday sermon series, and so this passage, I think, ties in really nicely to the idea that we ended on earlier today, which is Jesus overcoming the world.

So you can turn in your Bibles to 1 John 5, verses 4 through 12, and as we get there, we're going to take a step back and look at the letter of 1 John, because this letter was written by one of Jesus' 12 disciples, who was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And John is writing this letter to the early church, and he has seven purposes for writing this letter. Purpose number one, throughout the letter, he uses a repeated phrase that, I write these things to you so that, and so we're going to see a list of seven things, seven purposes John has to write to the church.

The first one is he wants the church to have joy. Secondly, he wants the church to live righteously and reject sin. He wants the church to experience forgiveness, to know God, to live in victory over the world, to avoid false teaching, and to have eternal life.

[1 : 33] So when you think about this list for a moment, think about your own life, and think about how many of us could use more joy in our life.

Is there anyone who struggles to do what you know God wants you to do all the time? Have you ever questioned even maybe whether God is out there, whether God is watching and involved in your life?

Or maybe you're unsure whether God can forgive you of the sins of your past. Have you ever felt defeated or exhausted by physical or emotional pain?

Maybe you wrestle with anxiety or depression or just a sense of hopelessness with everything going on in the world. Maybe you're like me and you long for a better world, one that's free from war, free from suffering, pain, pride, and despair.

If you can relate to these things, then the book and the letter of 1 John was written to you, and it has a lot to say to us in our current situation here today.

[2 : 39] In our passage we're going to look at, John is going to teach us how to have victory. Both victory in our life now on this earth and also victory for all eternity.

And in this short passage that we're going to look at, John is going to share three victories for us. He's going to share how we can have victory in life, victory in truth, and victory in eternal life.

So first we'll begin by looking at what it means to have victory in life. So 1 John chapter 5 verses 4 through 5 says, For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

So the Greek word used for overcome and victory in this passage is actually used four times. It's the Greek word *nike*. And this word means to conquer, to be victorious, or to overcome.

[3 : 48] In that culture at the time, there was an idol that the people worshipped. It was the Greek goddess Nike. It may be familiar because we have the popular athletic clothing brand Nike today in our current culture.

But this goddess who was widely worshipped in that day was sought. She was prayed to for victory in every area of life. Whether it was an athletic event or a war or something else.

She was the goddess of victory. So John is using this same word and the same idea of victory and contrasting the false goddess Nike to the true God of victory, which is Jesus.

John is saying that only real, true, and lasting victory can be found through Jesus Christ. And John describes this victory in our passage as overcoming the world.

And the idea of the world is defined earlier in 1 John 2, verse 16. It says, For everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father, but from the world.

[5 : 03] The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. So the world represents things that we're tempted to let consume us or we're tempted to replace our worship towards God in our life.

The lust of the flesh refers to the physical pleasures of life. Things like sex or alcohol or food or other physical pleasure.

The lust of the eyes includes things like beauty, wealth, possessions, and the idea of your personal image or keeping up appearances. And the pride of life is the unhealthy desire for things like power, control, status, and fame.

But notice that John doesn't say that these worldly things in and of themselves are bad. In fact, we know from the book of Genesis that God created the world and he declared that the world is good. He declared that we are to enjoy it and we should be fruitful and multiply. So what John is saying is it's the sinful desire for these worldly things that's wrong.

[6 : 17] And it's sin that has twisted what God has made good and sin tempts us to replace God with things of the world. Sin is what tempts us to have an unhealthy desire, a lust for these things or a pride for these worldly things.

Sin tempts us to make the good things of this world central and replace God in our life. And this is called idolatry and it's referred to throughout scripture really as the root of sin.

It says in Romans chapter 1 that we've replaced the truth of God for a lie and we've worshipped created things rather than our creator God. So John isn't saying to follow Jesus that we can't enjoy great food or drink.

He's not saying we can't be successful or even famous. But rather he's saying that we ought not to lust after these things. We shouldn't have an unhealthy desire for them.

John says we can have victory over the lust and the sinful desires for these things by believing in Jesus. See believing in Jesus will properly reorder our worship.

[7 : 29] It'll put God as central in our lives so that the things of this world then can fall into their rightful place surrounding and secondary to our worship of God.

So practically speaking, having victory over the world means that we can be generous with our wealth rather than worshipping our wealth and possessions. It means we can enjoy the physical pleasures of life within their proper boundaries and we can enjoy them responsibly.

It means we can achieve power and status and success or even fame, but we don't allow it to cause us to compromise our character. And we don't allow it to compromise our convictions.

And we're not tempted to do things that we know God would not want us to do in order to get more likes or followers or fans.

Victory over the world is to enjoy what we have rather than not always wanting more. Victory over the world is the ability to say no to sin and embrace life the way God designed it to be lived.

[8 : 38] And victory over the world is having an eternal perspective, knowing that this world is not our home and our greatest pleasure, treasure, and status is waiting for us to enjoy one day with God for all eternity.

So let me ask you a question as you think about your own life. Are you enjoying this victory that John's describing? Are you struggling on the hamster wheel of life, always wanting more of something, more status, more possessions, more wealth, more pleasure?

Are you stuck in habitual sins of overindulgence or lust? Do you find your sense of security or your self-worth in measuring your status or your beauty or your possessions?

If you want to be free from this unhealthy desire for things of this world, then we'll continue reading and John's going to tell us how we can experience this freedom.

When we look at verse 4, John says that everyone who is born of God overcomes the world. And he emphasizes in this verse that it's only through belief in Jesus that we can find this victory.

[10 : 00] He says, who is it except the one who believes in Jesus that can overcome the world? So this idea of being born again or born of God is actually described in the Gospel of John chapter 3 when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus.

And he says, unless you're born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. So that word born of God or born again is the same Greek word.

It could be translated as regenerate or to create new. So scripture teaches us that we must have a spiritual rebirth in order to truly experience this victory over the world.

And this rebirth we achieve through our faith in Christ. Now it's important that we don't miss this, that this victory that John's describing, it's of overcoming our worldly lusts and pride.

It's not accomplished by us. We can't set ourselves free from sin by our own strength. No matter how disciplined we are or how many good works we think we can do, we're never truly going to be free apart from Christ.

[11 : 14] We can't win this battle ourselves, but the good news is that Jesus has accomplished this for us. By trusting in Christ, we can become spiritually reborn, filled with the Holy Spirit, and empowered to overcome sin.

Another interesting aspect of the Greek word *nike* in our passage is that it's actually used in two different ways in our verse. It's used in a way that describes a completed process as well as an ongoing action.

So victory in the sense of our salvation is both a completed process as well as an ongoing action. It's complete in the sense that when we trust in Jesus, we're immediately forgiven of our sin, and we're saved from the eternal punishment of hell.

However, there's still an ongoing process that occurs in our life here on earth. It's a gradual transformation referred to as sanctification.

If you haven't yet placed your faith in Jesus, then you can't experience this victory. Apart from Christ, our sin will overcome us, and we're destined for hell.

[12 : 29] Jesus describes hell as a place of eternal punishment, fire, suffering, and darkness. If this is you today, you're being called to turn from your sin through repentance and placing your faith in Jesus Christ to begin experiencing this true and everlasting victory.

But what about those of us who have been born again? Maybe we still feel trapped by the habitual sin or a worldly mindset. Well, you also are being called to let go of that idolatry, whatever it is that continually is grabbing your attention away from Christ.

We're being called to refocus back to Christ. It's not that all of a sudden when you become a Christian that you no longer have these sinful desires for things of this world, but rather we now have the Holy Spirit.

We now have the power within us through Christ to overcome those temptations and those sins. So as believers, we must continually pursue a deeper relationship with Christ in order to experience his power and truly overcome our sin in life.

And practically, you can see it looks like prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you, renewing your mind by meditating on the words of God. It looks like community and accountability for support.

[13 : 58] And it looks like taking actions of faith and wisdom to help you walk in victory. The Bible teaches us that the world is ruled by the evil one, the devil.

And it says that the devil is a liar. And one of the biggest lies that Christians believe is we have these thoughts that say we can't overcome our sin.

We're weak. We're powerless. And if you believe this, you never will overcome your sin. If you let those lies prevail, then you will never access the power that's available to you through the Holy Spirit who dwells within believers.

As we read in our passage, it's completely false that we can't overcome our sin. In fact, Christ has already overcome our sin. And therefore, by relying on him, we can too.

The next aspect of victory we see in our passage is victory in truth. Starting in verse 6, John writes, This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.

[15 : 07] Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood.

And these three agree. So John is describing how the church can know what he's saying is true. And when you think about it for a moment, how in our culture today do we officially and legally establish something is true?

Well, it's our legal system, right? You have a court, and you have witnesses and testimonies. You have eyewitnesses and experts who know and can speak on the subject matter that will provide a

testimony.

And our American judicial system is actually based on Old Testament law. God sets guidelines for establishing truth in the Old Testament in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 19, verse 15.

He says, So in order to be confident that something is true, there must be two or three witnesses who attest to it.

[16:33] And so John is following this principle in his letter, and he's saying, We have three witnesses testifying of this truth. We have the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

So first, John refers to the water, and this is referring to the water of Jesus' baptism. If you remember in the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism, it says, During the baptism, there was a voice coming down, a voice from heaven that says, This is my Son with whom I'm well pleased.

So the water represents the testimony of God the Father, spoken about who Jesus is. Next, we have the blood, which refers actually to Jesus' own testimony about himself.

It refers to the blood of the new covenant and the blood of the crucifixion that Jesus continually prophesied about throughout his earthly ministry, that he would be killed and crucified for the forgiveness of sin.

So the blood here is the testimony of Jesus himself declaring that he is the Son of God crucified on behalf of mankind.

[17:44] The third testimony is that of the Holy Spirit, who our passage says the Spirit is truth. And we learn throughout Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the one that dwells within believers.

It's a testimony of who Christ is to our hearts and minds. So we have these three testimonies, and John goes on to expand on these.

He's saying, You accept the testimony of men. In other words, when there's a court of law, you have two or three witnesses who establish a truth, and you believe these men when they testify of this.

How much more should you believe in God? How much more should you believe in Christ?

Because we have three testimonies, one from God the Father, one from God the Son, and one from God the Holy Spirit.

There's no more profound way to establish a truth than by the three testimonies of God himself. So at this point, we need to examine ourselves and ask ourselves, Have I truly believed these testimonies?

[18:54] Have I trusted in Jesus Christ as my God and as my Savior? And if you say you believe, then ask yourself, What testimony does your life bear?

Jesus has many commands of obedience to his followers. Things like repentance of sin, asking to receive the Holy Spirit, taking up our crosses daily to follow him.

And then in another New Testament letter, the book of James, it describes that even the demons believe in God, but yet the demons don't submit to him.

So we have to make the distinction, Is our belief in God that like the demons, this intellectual acknowledgement of who Christ is, or is it actually being a follower of Christ?

Have you truly submitted your life to Christ? And if your words confess that you're a follower of Christ, ask yourself, do your attitudes confess that?

[19:55] Do your actions, do your priorities in life align with those words? Is there evidence of the rebirth and the Holy Spirit in your life?

Is there evidence of self-sacrifice for others? Would someone on the outside looking into your life say that you're living for Christ or you're living for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life?

And this brings us to the final section of our passage, which describes victory in eternal life. John says at verse 10, whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself, and whoever does not believe in God has made him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

And this is the testimony that God gave us, eternal life. And this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

John says, when we believe in Christ, we receive the testimony of Christ in ourselves. The truth of God, in other words, is no longer separate and external to us, but it's an inward, undeniable experience of the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 17] Once you believe and receive the Holy Spirit, his presence, nature, and character is experiential. It's the deepest kind of knowledge that we can have.

It's like when I offer my oldest daughter a new type of food. She's a really picky eater. I have to convince her that this food is going to be delicious.

You know, she's going to love it. And sometimes she tries the food, and when she does, she ends up having that knowledge in herself. She has the experience of liking it for herself.

So when I offer her more of the food, she knows for sure that it's good, and she takes it without question. But other times, my daughter will completely refuse what I'm offering her.

She won't believe the words that I'm saying. And in essence, when she's rejecting what I offer her, she's calling me a liar. She also misses out on the goodness and the enjoyment of that experience.

[22 : 20] And John's showing us that in our passage today, that we do the same thing when we don't believe in Christ. The Bible teaches us that the root of all sin is unbelief and a rejection of God.

And this is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden, when God said that not to eat of the forbidden fruit, and yet they did it anyway. And this is what we've done every day of our lives when we break any one of God's commands.

But despite the fact that every one of us has sinned, and every one of us has called God a liar and far worse, God still loves us and desires a relationship with us.

This is really the main point of our passage today, and the main point of the entire message of Scripture, that despite mankind's sin and rejection of God, that God sent his son Jesus to live the perfect, sinless life that we couldn't live, and to suffer and die on our behalf.

Jesus absorbed the wrath of God for us, and three days after his crucifixion he resurrected, proving he is God and proving that he has victory over sin, Satan, death, and eternal torment.

[23 : 36] Jesus promises one day he will return and judge all mankind. Some will receive eternal life, and others will receive eternal judgment. And no matter how much of a good person you think you've been, or I think I've been, at the final judgment, no one will be declared innocent based on their own merit and their own good works.

No one will have lived up to God's perfect standard. But the good news is Jesus offers us eternal life by accepting his victory and his merit on our behalf.

But in order to have this eternal life, our passage tells us that we must have Christ. Notice John doesn't say we need to have an intellectual acknowledgement that we believe in God or that we believe in Jesus.

He's speaking of this experiential knowledge, this deepest possible level of knowledge. And unlike me telling my daughter to enjoy new food, the stakes for believing in Christ here are life and death. God is like our Father telling us we have this deadly disease and that Jesus is the only cure. So John is clear that apart from a true, deep, and experiential knowledge of Jesus, we will not have eternal life.

[24 : 59] So the decision is up to each one of us to make today. If you don't have Christ, will you continue to reject God? Will you continue in the way of the world, driven by worldly goals and values and objectives?

Will you keep rejecting the only cure for sin and remain destined for eternal punishment and death? Will you trust him with more than just your words, but with your entire life?

Will you trust his guidance for your marriage, for your finances, for your eating and drinking, your sex life, your friendships, your reputation, your purpose, and every other decision that you make?

If you're a Christian today, are you living in this victory that John describes? Are you acting as if you're weak and you're in this battle alone? Are you believing the lie of the enemy that you can't overcome your sin?

If you're a Christian here today, will you make a fresh commitment to deepen your relationship with Christ and depend on the Holy Spirit's power to find a greater freedom and a greater victory over worldly things that tempt to pull you away from God?

[26 : 19] Will you press on in following Christ, focusing on him and the true victory that only he can offer us both now and for all eternity?

German theologian and father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, in the early 1500s, he wrote what is said to be the greatest hymn of the greatest man in the greatest period of history.

It's a hymn I'm sure many of us are familiar with, A Mighty Fortress is Our God. He writes in this song that if we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing.

We're not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing. You ask who that may be, Christ Jesus, it is he. Lord Sabbath, his name from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him.

[27 : 30] His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him. Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.

The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever. Luther fully grasped the victory of Christ, both now and for all eternity.

Luther's life marked a powerful turning point throughout all of Christian history with the Protestant Reformation. Luther understood that nothing in this world could compare, nothing could be more valuable than knowing Christ.

And Luther also knew that having Christ means that even the worst suffering, even death that we face, cannot ultimately defeat us.

But rather, the worst suffering and death will only more fully unite us in the victory that Christ has accomplished for us. May each of us experience this victory.

[28 : 32] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this opportunity to learn from your word how to have victory. Victory in life, victory in truth, and victory in eternal life.

I ask that each one of us here would apply your word today and walk in dependence on you, that you'd fill us with a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit, and that we'd walk in truth and in power to help those around us who are struggling, and that we would share this victory with others, that they too may follow you and have eternal life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.