

IN JESUS WE OVERCOME THE WORLD

1 John 5:1-21

Key Verse: 5:5

“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

In 1 John 5, St. John teaches us how to overcome the world. Those who live with a sense of defeatism are most sorrowful, whether they are noble or ordinary. Surely, in Jesus we must overcome the world. May God bless us to learn how to overcome the world. In actuality, 1 John 5 is the conclusion and summary of the Epistle of 1 John. It is good to review the contents. May God richly bless you and help you remember all the life-giving words from this chapter.

First, in the name of Jesus, we overcome the world (1).

Look at verse 1. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well." This verse says that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God or born of God. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God is to believe that God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to this world and made him humble as a servant. While on earth, the Son preached the good news of salvation and healed the sick. Finally, he became the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world, shedding his blood on the cross. Because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we love God more than silver or gold. And we love the children of God dearly, so dearly. God might have chosen someone else if he could. But all human beings are sin-stained. God could not but choose his one and only Son, who is sinless, as the atoning sacrifice. Those who realize this love of God are children of God. Here we learn that true victory does not belong to man's physical body. True victory belongs to our souls.

As we studied, "born of God," has deep meaning in it. Those born of God are children of God. Those who are not born of God are children of the devil. We need Jesus because of the devil. The devil's main work is to plant the diseases of doubt in the hearts of ordinary people and make everybody sick with sin, and suffer. The devils were originally God's right-hand men. But they became proud and the adversaries of God.

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Jude verse 6 says, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for [judgment](#) on the great Day." When they rebelled against God, they became like horrible animals. Revelation 12:3 symbolizes the devil. It says, "Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads." The devil wants to make as many men as possible brutal animals. Praise and [thank](#) God that we are children of God through our Lord [Jesus Christ](#). He became the atoning sacrifice who shed his blood to take away our sins and all our iniquities and transgressions. God is our Father, and we are his beloved children. We also love God's children.

By believing that Jesus is the Son of God, there are two persons who said, "I have overcome the world." One is Jesus. In order to become the atoning sacrifice on the cross, shedding his blood, Jesus had to go through much suffering and the crucifixion. But Jesus encouraged his disciples, saying, "I have overcome the world." John 16:33 says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The other is St. Paul. St. Paul was very old. He poured out his life as a drink offering. But he did not say, "I am tired and sorrowful." Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8a, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day...." Here, Paul's testimony is his confidence that he has won victory over the world; he is about to pass away, and at the same time, he is standing to be crowned with the crown of righteousness. This story sounds very common to us. But it is not common at all. It may be the unique testimony of victory in Jesus. In Jesus, Paul was the one who overcame the world.

Second, the secret of overcoming the world (2-5).

First of all, in order to be the children of God, we must know how to thank God (Ro 1:21). That's the evidence that we are born of God. In the world, the most difficult thing is to thank God or to thank one's wife or parents. Many people want God's blessing. They live according to God's promises. God blesses them. Then they forget God's grace

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completely. They become their own man. But the most important thing is that we should not forget to thank God in all circumstances. One time, St. Paul went to Philippi and preached the gospel of salvation. Many were converted. Among them, a fortune-teller was also converted. The owner felt he could not make money through the fortune-teller anymore. He put Paul and Silas in prison. After being beaten much and put in prison, humanly speaking, Paul and Silas could not thank God. But Acts 16:25 says, "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them." This verse tells us that Paul and Silas were full of thanks, suffering for the sake of Jesus' name. But since Adam's fall, sin came into mankind. Sin makes man unthankful. When we study Romans chapter 1, the root cause of all human problems is people's unthankful mind and not recognizing God as God. If we do not thank God, we become unthankful people. Unthankful people become all kinds of evil people (Ro 1:22-31).

The love of God overflows in the hearts of the children of God. With the love of God, we care for the children of God, for the love of Christ compels us (2Co 5:14), not because we have leisure time, but because we are compelled by the love of God to take care of God's flock of sheep. There is a woman who married a very handsome young man, who is a cellist. She began to study the Bible from her high school days. She lived a life of giving thanks. Her motto was, "Thank you, thank you, hee, hee." Out of her thanks for God's saving grace, she began to study the Bible diligently and regularly. She has also fed many sheep sacrificially. So she is now fruitful and blessed with two mothers of prayer and an only son. There is a woman who majored in accounting. Because of her accounting background, she calculated and measured time and money. She looked like a typical worldly person. She was so pretty and she was a cutie-size and her nose was waving in the air. But since she realized the love of God through Jesus, she became a completely different person. In the past, she studied only for herself. But after Jesus came into her heart, she thanked God always (1Th 5:16-18). She was also mindful of her classmates, especially Missionary Joseph Ahn's accounting study. Moreover, she married a man of God, so she could have forgotten about God. But never! She didn't forget the love of God. She is full of thanks. She cares for her sheep like her children. There is a high school teacher in Milwaukee. He quit his high school

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teacher's job and is living a poor life and dedicates himself, together with his wife, for Milwaukee campus evangelism. In this insecure American situation, to give up his high school teacher's job and to trust in God's help and guidance for the future is remarkable. We can say that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

We are living in a capitalistic structure or an imperialistic society. Therefore, to love others through one-to-one Bible teaching seems to be impossible. But St. John says it is not burdensome when we have the love of God in our hearts. Look at verse 3. "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...." These days people are indifferent and selfish and clever in pragmatic intrigues for selfish benefit. How can we give our time, which is life itself? We can give our time for others because we are born of God and we are children of God. And we keep his command because we love God.

Third, losers, to be condemned.

We know that even in the 100 meter track race there is a victor and a loser. We also know there is an ultimate final victor and loser of life. It is a solemn fact that God has given each person one life. In retrospect, history tells us that all the conquerors and worldly heroes won the battles or wars of the world, but they all died in the deep realization of their defeats in their lives in the world. When we think about world famous conquerors, we naturally remember Julius Caesar. He thought he conquered his part of the world. But he was stabbed in the back by Brutus. Then Caesar said, "You, too, Brutus!" It meant, "You defeated me, my most loyal subject." Joseph Stalin, even though he is named after New Testament Joseph, did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He colonized 16 neighbor countries and made them speak only Russian. Only five million Jews were forbidden to learn Russian to isolate them. In spite of his achievements and power, they say that he suffered from "Hitler phobia," thinking that Hitler was the contemporary Napoleon Bonaparte. Stalin and lived in an underground tunnel for 30 years and died soon after World War II. Mark Twain was a writer so popular that elementary school kids wanted to be writers like Mark Twain, not president. But he died after saying the most sorrowful words, "It might have been." It means, "If I live one more time, I would live a better life." Many tried to find one who said, "I have

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overcome the world," or "The crown of righteousness is before me." But they all died in defeat or defeatism.

Many people try to achieve something, looking for a shortcut for their success and wealth. Some people try hard to maintain their world boxing titles. Usually world-class boxing champions get up at 3:00 a.m., jog 10 miles, take a one-hour rest, and then go to a boxing training camp. There was a boxing champion named Julio Caesar Chavez. He had 85 knockouts out of 99 victories. But he was knocked out by a man ten years younger than himself, who had worshiped Julio Chavez as his own hero. Chavez got a left hook and his eye was cut and heavily bleeding. His nose was broken. Finally, the referee stopped the fight. He lost his championship and all his fame as a hero of the Mexicans. I heard that one senior shepherd cried at his defeat. In this world, there is no permanent victory. One man, without studying in grade school, became the number two man in a Korean bank. He was very arrogant and proud of himself that he was a man of achievement and a victor in the world. But he retired from the bank at age 52. After using all the money he earned during one year, he died of a stroke caused by his anxiety. He thought he defeated the world. But he was nothing but a loser. It is because he did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

We know Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), who wrote "War and Peace," "Anna Karenina," and "Resurrection." He is indeed the outstanding genius in literature. Ordinary men don't even understand their wife's character. A brilliant young man who is handsome does not know the beauty of a woman. He evaluated Maria in "The Sound of Music," a woman of charm and beauty, as a selfish woman. But in his novel, "War and Peace," Tolstoy described 383 different people's characters so precisely. We can say he is 383 times more a man of insight than ordinary people. Many a person does not even know what kind of person he himself is. Tolstoy became a Christian of his own kind. He wrote many beautiful novels. He had a sense of God's majesty in his religiosity and enhanced the moral standard of chaotic Russian people based on the Sermon on the Mount. But he felt superior. Then he became proud. Finally, he did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. As a result, he could not accept God's gift, Jesus Christ, and eternal life through his Son and the kingdom of God as his inheritance. So he could not thank God at his

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death. Contrary to his writing, he is known as the one who died with the most tragic hallucination.

Look at verse 5. "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." A true victor is only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Why is it so? In history, there were many people who perceived that there is a spiritual world and God Almighty. But because they did not know Jesus, they made all kinds of idols and worshiped them. In history, the number of idols made by men is in the multi-billions. As we know well, there are two world currents. One is Hellenism, which is humanism. The other is Hebraism, which claims theism. Since Hellenistic people do not believe in God, but are only humanistic and mainly interested in sports or Olympic Games, they should not have idols. But all the stories of myth (mythology) and terrible names of idols came from Greece, the origin of Hellenism. Greek myths are too eerie to read. When Paul went to Athens, he found the city of Athens was filled with idols, all kinds of idols. Each had its own kind of name. There were innumerable nameless idols, too (Ac 17:23). Since the world was made, mankind lived on earth seeking God the Almighty as if they were looking for a mom to help them.

True victors are those who overcome the world by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, not idols. It is because God sent his one and only Son to this world and made him an atoning sacrifice for our sins. As a result, he rescued us from the power of darkness and Satan and brought us into the marvelous light of Jesus who teaches us the way and the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). Jesus is God. Jesus is the Almighty Creator God. But he came to this world and humbled himself to the state of being a servant and served us sinners by becoming the atoning sacrifice. Jesus is the God whom many ancient people were looking for. The three Magi from the east are representatives of all those who did not know the name of Jesus (Mt 2:1,2). Those who believe in Jesus have true victories in their lives and they are those who overcome the world. They are those who are prepared to be crowned, because they believed that Jesus is the Son of God.

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Fourth, Jesus gives eternal life (6-12).

Look at verse 6. "This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." This is the point St. John argues with Gnostics. As we studied, Gnostics, by the influence of Plato, claimed that matter is evil and spirit is good. Plato did not say matter is evil and spirit is good. He said, "Matter is evil and idea is good." He thought "Idea" is "Logos," which is unknown Supreme Being. When Plato said "Idea" it did not mean that it was the idea about a Big Mac. He speculated about Logos or "invincible, supreme good." Anyway, he realized that the world was composed of the terrestrial and the celestial. These Gnostics claimed that Jesus could not be a man, and that Jesus could not be the atoning sacrifice. For if Jesus took a human form and died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice, he could not be God; rather, he must be evil, and a phantom figure.

Look at verses 8-9. "...the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son." Here St. John claims that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he is the perfect God and the perfect man. God gave his one and only Son as the atoning sacrifice for all men's sins. Nobody gives his one and only Son as the atoning sacrifice. I heard that one senior shepherd cried when his grandson was going back to his daddy's house. In short, the fact that God gave his one and only Son as an atoning sacrifice is not a philosophical argument, it is the love of God. God himself is the one who testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. Here "testimony" means words, and it was the word of God which promised, prophesied and was fulfilled through his Son Jesus Christ when he sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. Those Gnostics did not believe God's word, the testimony of God. They were like Jean Jacques Rousseau, who wrote *Emile* (Education) and became world famous, but abandoned his five illegitimate children and sent them to orphanages one by one (10b).

Why is it so important that we believe Jesus is the Son of God? Look at verses 11-12. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal

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life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." It is important to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, because only through the Son we have eternal life. Men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever (1Pe 1:24,25).

Many think that death is the end of everything. So they say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Cor 15:32b). Some people think that eternal life is only the matter after death. But this is not true. Eternal life starts at present. John 5:24 says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." This verse explains that when we received eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ, we crossed over from death to life and it is the past event. We have eternal life at the present. Eternal life starts the moment we accept Jesus as our personal Savior. The Spirit of Jesus gives us new life every day. The Spirit of Jesus gives us a new day and a new wife, even though she is the same wife. For those who have eternal life, everything is new every day. Those who have eternal life can see the kingdom of God and can enter the kingdom of God. Ordinary people's agony is what will be the reward of their lifetime work. Those who do not believe in Jesus have no reward. They must stand at the judgment seat of God to be condemned. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." After judgment, they are put into eternal punishment (Rev 21:8). In this world, the most foolish thing is being unthankful to God in spite of the fact that God gave his Son as the atoning sacrifice so that those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Fifth, we can talk to Jesus about everything in our hearts (13-21).

In the past, we were all like Cain, who was greatly distressed to be around God, even if he had to bear the sense of punishment and guilt and wander around the world without any meaning of life. But through Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice, we have access to God (Ro 5:2). We can freely approach God. We can ask anything in Jesus' name (Mk 11:24). Then he hears us. And we can have great confidence that he will guide

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us and lead us and be with us as long as we are in this world as pilgrims. Look at verses 14-15. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him." How wonderful it is that our Shepherd Jesus is our best friend to whom we can tell everything. Otherwise, it is impossible for us to tell everything in our hearts and we would die sorrowfully.

There are two kinds of sins (16). One is unforgivable. The other is forgivable. All other sins are forgivable, but those who deny that Jesus is the Son of God are unforgivable, because they are born of the devil. In other words, those who believe Jesus in their minds only, and do not practice anything, are all unforgivable sinners. Those who are born of God do not continue to sin, and they also keep themselves safe from evil and harm because God gives them understanding (18-20).

Look at verse 21. As his final words, St. John says, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." Here, those who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God are all idol-worshippers. There is no "my own man" in the kingdom of God. They are all precious children of God. Here we learn that Gnostics are liars, and contemporary intellectual hedonists. John 8:44 tells us that the devil is a liar from the beginning, and liars are murderers.

Let's believe that Jesus is the perfect God and perfect man and that he is the Son of God. In him we have eternal life and the crown of righteousness. May God bless you to stand before the Son of God to be crowned gloriously as victors.