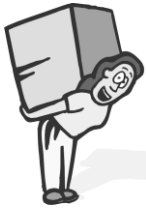


Overcoming the World

1 John 5:1-12

How to Overcome the World

1. Read 1 John 5:1-5. If we truly love God, we will love his children and obey his commands. And John writes, “[God’s] commands are not burdensome (hard to bear)” (5:3). In what way(s) are God’s commands “not burdensome?”¹



📖 *Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)*²

📖 “I delight to do your will, O my God” (*Psalms 40:8, ESV*)

2. Then why do we sometimes struggle to obey?

3. The phrase “overcome(s) the world”³ occurs three times in verses 4-5. Who “overcomes the world?” What does it mean for us to “overcome the world?” (Consider 1 John 2:15-17, 4:1-6)



4. For us to “overcome the world,” what essential ingredient is needed in our lives?⁴ (5:4b)

📖 *Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33b, NIV)*

¹ It is *not* because God’s commands are not demanding (e.g., Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5-7 is very demanding). However, those who are united with Christ have a new birth and life (5:4); a new ability and power (the indwelling Holy Spirit), and a new desire to obey God’s commands.

² As opposed to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, who ‘tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders’ (Matthew 23:4, NIV). Jesus’ burden is ‘light’ not because his demands are easy, but because he is helping to bear the burden, and gives the strength needed.

³ In this context, *kosmos* (world) means ‘the world, and everything that belongs to it, as that which is opposed to God.’ If we are captive to the world’s values, ideas and ways, the world has overcome *us*! If we turn away from the world’s values, ideas, and ways, and instead follow the truth and way of God, then we will overcome the world.

⁴ F.A.I.T.H. – Forsaking All I Trust Him. Faith involves forsaking (turning from) the world’s beliefs, attitudes and ways, and trusting in Jesus Christ, who has ‘overcome the world’ (John 16:33). Faith includes believing the truth about Jesus Christ – who he is, and what he has done. Faith needs to be ongoing in our lives.

Reflection/Application

- Do you find it extremely difficult to do what is right (that is, what God commands)? Only the child of God has the desire *and* ability to obey God’s commands. Have you become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ?
- As a Christian, are you “overcoming the world?” Identify “worldly” attitudes and habits in your life. Choose one or more of these attitudes or habits, and commit to change. By God’s grace, live by faith.⁵

The Basis of Faith

5. Read 1 John 5:6-11. Some false teachers taught that the divine Christ (the Son of God) descended on the human Jesus after his baptism and left him before his death.⁶ What is wrong with this view? How does verse 6 refute this teaching?⁷



6. The Old Testament law required two or three witnesses to prove a claim (*Deuteronomy 19:15*). What are the three witnesses listed by John, and what do they testify?⁸ Why should we accept their testimony?

📖 *Jesus said, “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.” (John 15:26, NIV)*

7. In what way is “life”⁹ connected to belief in God’s testimony concerning Jesus Christ?

Reflection/Application

- Have you believed “God’s testimony” concerning Christ? If not, identify the specific reasons why you do not believe, and seek Christian responses to your objections, with an open heart.
- If you have believed God’s testimony, in what ways are *you* testifying concerning Christ (*John 15:27*)? Determine what you need to do in order to be an active witness for Christ.

⁵ Faith is not just accepting that Jesus is the Son of God, but embracing the significance of that fact, and trusting God for everything we will ever need in the future, beginning in the next moment.

⁶ This was the teaching of ‘Cerinthianism’ (named after the false teacher Cerinthus), which apparently had influenced the recipients of John’s letter.

⁷ ‘The water’ and ‘the blood’ (*the Greek text uses definite articles in v. 6b*) refer to historical events. The water symbolizes Jesus Christ’s baptism and the blood symbolizes his death. Jesus was the divine Christ through both his baptism (the water) and crucifixion (the blood). The divine Christ has *always* existed. At a particular time in history, he took on human flesh, was given the name Jesus, and lived among us (*John 1:1, 14*). He was baptized, he healed and taught, he was crucified, he was raised from the dead, he ascended to heaven, and he is coming back.

⁸ They include 1) the water and 2) the blood – the objective historical events, and 3) the Holy Spirit, who testifies in various ways. After Jesus’ baptism, John the baptizer ‘saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on [Jesus]’ (*John 1:29-34, NIV*). Through the Spirit, Jesus was declared ‘the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead’ (*Romans 1:3-4, NIV*). The Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture (*2 Peter 1:21*). The Spirit continues to testify concerning Christ (*John 15:26; 16:7-13*). There is also the inner witness of the Spirit: ‘The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children’ (*Romans 8:16, NIV*).

⁹ This ‘life’ is eternal and abundant – the highest quality of existence. It is found in ‘the Life’ – Jesus (*John 14:6*).