

## Opening Words

We regularly talk in Christian circles about overcoming the world, but what does that mean and how do we do it?

### 344 41 1 John How to Achieve Out of this World Success 1

Today I want to talk with you about how to achieve “out of this world” success. I have a love/hate relationship with that title, and I’m the one who created it! I don’t like it because it sounds like I’m going to speak about something that you would see on a TV infomercial. It sounds like the dime-a-dozen gimmicky books you find in the pop-psychology section of a bookstore. Or it sounds like one of those “ground level” sales opportunities that will solve all our financial problems.

But I also like the title – because, in one sense God does want us to be successful. He didn’t create us to be losers. He created us to succeed, not just in life, but for eternity. And when I talk about “out of this world” success, I’m talking about success that exceeds anything this world can offer. In the title, I imply that we must achieve it. Although we need the grace of God to do anything, there is a role we must play to achieve success – our role is to have faith.

In Christian circles, we regularly call success “being overcomers.” And that is the way it is expressed in the verses we will look at in our next two broadcasts – 1 John 5:4-5.

<sup>4</sup>for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Do you see the “success” vocabulary in these verses? Three times John uses the word, “overcomes” and once he uses the word, “victory.” But when John uses these “success” words, he is thinking about something very different than the kind of success the world talks about. In fact, John talks about “**overcoming** the world.” And John says, “this is the **victory** that overcomes the world.” We don’t accommodate the world. We don’t compromise with the world. We overcome it.

What, “in the world”, does all this mean? Let me ask the question in four ways.

1. What does John mean by “the world?”
2. Why does the world have to be “overcome?”
3. What does overcoming the world look like?
4. Why does faith in Jesus as the Son of God give us victory over the world?

I want to answer these questions in the next two broadcasts and help you to achieve “out of this world” success. If you stick with me, learn how to answer these questions, and live by these answers, you will achieve “out of this world” success.

## 1. What does John mean by “the world?”

John uses this phrase, “the world” 18 times in his letter. And he means three things by it:

1. The world = *the people living in the world*  
Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole **world**. 2:2
2. The world = *the material things of earth*  
But whoever has **the world’s goods**, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 3:17
3. The world = *a frame of mind and a way of life that is ignorant of, apathetic to, or defiant to God and His will and which is reinforced by the prevailing culture.*

<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

Same word, three meanings, and when John speaks of overcoming the world he is using the word in this third way – a frame of mind, a way of life that is ignorant of, apathetic to, or defiant to God and His will. Understanding the correct definition helps us answer the second question,

## 2. “Why does the world need to be overcome?”

Some people may say, “why do we even need this talk of overcoming the world as if there is a contest or worse, some type of conflict? Can’t we all just get along?”

Others may say, “I work hard to support my family. I have kids at home. I am trying to make ends meet. What does this have to do with where I live right now?”

Good questions! I have four reasons why we must overcome the world. Today I will share two with you.

1. We must overcome the world because the world is opposed to God. How many of you saw The Bible mini-series that premiered on television this past spring? I watched it with my whole family. One of my favorite scenes was from the Book of Daniel where Daniel’s three friends refused to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. You remember that story, don’t you? Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of an image where the head was of gold, the torso of silver, the legs of bronze, and the feet made of iron and clay.

Daniel was the only man in Nebuchadnezzar’s court who could reveal the dream and

interpret it and the dream outlined succeeding world empires starting with Babylon represented by the head of gold. So what did Nebuchadnezzar do with this information? He made an image of gold and set it up for people to worship! Rather than telling everyone they should worship the God who revealed the dream, he told people to worship the image that represented him.

In the scene in the Bible movie, I noticed how the image that was set up looked just like Nebuchadnezzar. In effect, he had people bowing down to him! That's the way of the world. The world is opposed to God and at the heart of the opposition is idolatry. Rather than worshipping God, we want to worship something else, or, ourselves.

This is one reason why we must overcome the world – because the world was created to be a place where God is worshiped and enthroned as Lord over all. Is this what we want? Do we want only the Lord to be worshiped? Then we must overcome this spirit of idolatry in the world.

2. **Here is a second reason why we must overcome the world – Because the world is opposed to the truth.** Earlier this year, one of our listeners was reaching out to students at a university. They were passing out Bibles to university students, something they had done about 40 times over the past 20 years. They always followed the university guidelines about solicitation and gave them only to students who agreed to receive them. Others who did not want them only had to say, “no thank you” and those passing them out would then say, “Have a good day.” Sounds innocent enough, but on this occasion university personnel hindered them and one person threatened, “we’re going to shut you down.”

Why are people so adamant against the Bible? Many reasons exist and we can't go into them now. But one reason is that the world is opposed to the truth and this is why we must overcome the world. The world is against the perspective of the Bible. It is opposed to the biblical worldview that there is one God who made us, and we are accountable to him and that Christ is the Savior. You and I must overcome the world by promoting the truth of God's word.

May I say here again, that this is why we are asking God to sustain this ministry and to expand it around the world? You know, I am a man and a Christian teacher with strengths and weaknesses. I can think of others who can preach better and lead better than I can. They are pastors of mega-churches and God is using them in great ways and I praise God for every one of them. But I can tell you how God has gifted me. He has gifted me to teach his Word. I remember when I was 15 and wondering what I would do with my life and the thought struck me for the first time that God wanted to use me to teach his word. I did it faithfully in churches for 35 years and now he has given me this platform to reach a wider audience. This was surely a gift from him that came unexpectedly yet as a result of prayer. For this reason I want to ask you to join with us in our vision to take the teaching of the truth of God's word to this nation and the nations of the world. I hope you will support us by

your gifts and by your prayers so that we can teach the truth that the world is opposed to, yet desperately needs to hear.

I'm going to bring this message to a close today because I want us to pray about this together and I want us to pray about overcoming the world.

“Our Father in heaven, you have called us to overcome the world. Your Son overcame the world and now in his name he calls us to overcome the world in our lives and in our ministries. Lord, the world is opposed to you and that saddens our hearts, it breaks our hearts because you created this world. It really belongs to you. We want to promote you and your glory throughout this world. Lord, the world is opposed to the truth. The world promotes its lies and brings people into bondage. We want to set people free by the truth. I pray for your blessing upon everyone who hears us that they would love you and love the truth and promote your holy name and your word. Give them courage, faith, and the wisdom to know how to do this.

And Father we pray for this ministry. This is your ministry and you can do with it as you please. We ask, if it is your will, that you would raise up supporters to sustain this ministry as we seek to point a new generation to God's word and as we seek to teach your word to the nations.

It's all for you and we commit it to you in Jesus' name – Amen.”

God has commanded us in his word to overcome the world. We have looked at the first two of four ways to do this. In our next broadcast we will share two more. Join us for this important lesson.