

## Opening Words

Do you want to be an overcomer? Do you want to achieve out of this world success? Listen today and find out how!

### 345 42 1 John How to Achieve Out of this World Success

In our previous broadcast, we started exploring the words of John in chapter 5:4-5 of his letter. Let me read verses 4-5 to you again.

<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.

We looked at John's definition of the world and we learned that the world is *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*. It's not a list of "do's" and "don'ts" as much as it is a way of thinking that separates people from God.

We also started looking at why we must overcome the world and we discovered that we must engage in this battle because the world is opposed to God and the world is opposed to his truth. If you missed that message, I hope you will get it. Let me continue with two more reasons why we must overcome the world.

**3. Third, we must overcome the world, as John says, because the world is opposed to His will being done on earth.** The world wants to do its will, not God's will. Earlier this year I was at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention and had the privilege of meeting a Russian pastor whose church was demolished by the government. This church had stood in this place for decades and faithfully preached God's word, but it was bulldozed down. I talked with other leaders who used to broadcast the gospel throughout the entire Russian nation, and they are now shut down. Why? Because someone told the Russian leaders that the greatest threat to them remaining in power was the evangelical preaching of God's word! That wasn't true. God's people were not advocating revolution. Far from it. But the leader has a firm grip on power and wants the allegiance of everyone so that he can remain in power. He is not interested in the will of God being done on earth. This is the reason why we must overcome the world – we must demonstrate to the world what it means to do his will on earth.

**4. We must overcome the world because the world causes problems.** I have a good friend who is spending time right now in a prison in India. Do you know what the deepest desire of his heart is? It is to see the suffering of India alleviated by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Right now, 300,000,000 Dalits, untouchables suffer under the cruel caste system of Hinduism. These masses are tired of it and are ready to leave Hinduism and embrace another religion. My friend has expended every effort to reach as many as he can and wound up in jail for it. The world brings

suffering, such as the caste system. We must overcome such injustices by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. We must overcome the world for the sake of the people in the world.

Once I was reading the Sunday paper and I read a report about the relief aid for tsunami victims. You remember that tidal wave of destruction that killed hundreds of thousands. The aid that poured in for the peoples afflicted in this disaster was unprecedented. Never has the world given this much. But the article explained that most of the money so far has been unspent with a great deal of it squandered or pilfered by people without a conscience and the suffering continues.

I wanted to cry. I showed it to Kathy, and we both registered our disgust, and I became depressed about the situation. I felt like, “you can’t win in this world.” But that’s the world. Greed, selfishness, envy, and violence.

There’s another reason why we must overcome the world. John tells us in 2:17 that the **world** is passing away and its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. Friends, this world is like the Titanic and is sinking. The world is passing away. Who wants to be associated with a losing, failed, wrong cause?

And so those are a few reasons why we should want to overcome the world. And so, I have answered two questions based on this passage of Scripture. What does John mean by “the world,” and why does the world have to be overcome? Today, I will answer the next two questions.

Let me try to get even more practical with this by moving to our next major point

### **3. What does overcoming the world look like?**

#### **Look at the definition with me again:**

*a frame of mind and a way of life reinforced by the prevailing culture that is ignorant of, apathetic to, or defiant to God and His will.*

To overcome the world means to have a frame of mind, and a way of life that is based on God’s word and God’s will. Let me give you three examples.

You work in an environment where dirty politics come into play. People stab each other in the back and gossip in order to make themselves look better or advance their careers. You are invited, subtly, to participate, but you refuse. You think the best of everyone. You choose to pray for people. You make efforts to make others successful and you applaud when others are promoted. You have just overcome the world.

You live in a neighborhood where you hear of couples swapping partners and you are invited to join. The images of sin and fantasy rush into your mind and temptation is laid before you but you push back and say no. You are faithful to your wife and family. You have just overcome the world.

Something good happens at school and the teacher wants to honor you for it. You realize though that you were not the one with the idea and not the one who made it happen. You go to the teacher and say, “Really, you should honor someone else.” You have just overcome the world.

Paul said, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We overcome the world by ordering our way of thinking and our patterns of behavior according to the truth of God’s word and not according to the prevailing culture that focuses on power, pleasure, fame, and the never-ending accumulation of material possessions.

Let me move to the fourth and final question

#### **4. Why does faith in Jesus as the Son of God enable me to overcome the world?**

Listen to the text again – <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.

Notice that it is not just “faith” that overcomes the world, but it is a specific faith – faith in Jesus as the unique, eternal Son of God. You see, the world says, “Just believe. Just have faith. What matters most is that you believe ... in something.” But the world never specifies the object of your faith. Your faith is only as good as the object in which you place it.

Have any of you ever put your faith in someone and had them turn against you or disappoint you? It was great to have faith, but you discovered it was unfounded and ungrounded. It was great to have faith, but you learned it was misplaced and disgraced. Faith is only useful, is only good, if the object is worthy of faith.

I’m telling you today that there is One who is worthy of your complete trust and devotion and he is Jesus Christ, the eternal, unique Son of God who died for your sins, who rose from the dead, who is Lord of everything, and who wants to lead your life. Faith in this specific person is what overcomes the world – the prevailing culture that is ignorant, apathetic, or in rebellion to God.

Let me get back to the question “Why does faith in Jesus Christ enable us to overcome the world?”

The answer – because Jesus Christ cut right to the core of the problem of the world – pride.

The first sin of humanity was pride. The deceiving serpent says, “Eat this fruit and you’ll be a god.”

“Really? I can eat this, and I can be a god, like the God who made me? I’ll be equal with Him?”

What is that? Pride.

Jesus Christ came to say, “No, that is not true. There is only one God. And this one God who made everything does not, cannot share His deity with another.”

When John wrote this letter, he was dealing with the heresy that was tempting the Christians, “Follow us and you can be enlightened and ascend to the level of godhood.”

John says, “That’s the way the world thinks. That’s a frame of mind in rebellion to God. That is the Garden of Eden all over again. That must not be repeated but must be overcome, and the way anyone can overcome it is to place faith in Jesus Christ because when you place your faith in Him, you are saying, “I renounce all claims to deity. I renounce all claims to be in charge of my life. I humbly take my place as a creature, as a servant, and I will give all glory to God and live for His purposes.”

Here’s another way pride shows itself – “you can work your way to heaven. Be a good enough person and God is going to just let you in.”

Jesus says, “Sorry, I love you, and because I love you, I must tell you the truth. You can never be good enough. Your sin has made you guilty before God. But if you humble your pride and receive my gift of righteousness, I’ll take away your guilt, and you can have eternal life.”

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ we are saying, “I renounce all claims to my prideful, self-saving efforts. I humbly take my place as a sinner, in need of the grace of forgiveness and the grace of His righteousness.”

This is what John is talking about in this passage:

Everyone born of God overcomes this prideful and worldly way of thinking. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith because our faith puts God in the place of God and puts us in the place where we belong – humble before Him. Who is it that overcomes this prideful and worldly way of thinking? Only he who believes that Jesus is the unique, eternal Son of God because only Jesus told the truth about God and man.

Do you want to be an overcomer? Do you want to achieve out of this world success? You must connect to the one who told the truth about God, about man, about the world in which we live – Jesus Christ. Place your faith in him and be an overcomer!