

WALKING IN THE LIGHT- First John and the Path to Living Deeply in Christ - Part twenty-three

Sunday, June 27th, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2113

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THE FAITH THAT SAVES MUST OVERCOME THE WHOLE WORLD - continued

1 John 5:1-12 - "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. [2] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. [3] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. [4] For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. [5] Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [6] This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; 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. [7] For there are three that testify: [8] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. [9] If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. [10] Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. [11] And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

We started unfolding this rich text last Sunday. The first point was *when God's grace takes root in my understanding it produces obedience with joy*. That was the central idea we gleaned from **1 John 5:2-3 - "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. [3] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."** -
IPAD TEXT

There are two more points I want to cover today:

2) **NOTICE JOHN'S TEACHING ON THE DOWNWARD PULL OF THE WORLD**

IPAD TEXT - 1 John 5:4-5 - "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. [5] Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

As if to rub the truth into our ears John repeats the phrase

"overcomes the world" three times in these two verses.

Overcoming implies **opposition**. Faith must be **exercised** in this present world. And like exercising **any** muscle, faith doesn't usually **feel** good when stretched. Faith is believing there is more blessing and joy to be found in God's grace and God's ways, both now and in the future, than there ever could be in the ways of this world. That's what faith **is**. It's banking on God's will always being the best path for my ultimate joy.

There are millions of lies asserting themselves against my renewed mind in this world. So, while never a **burden**, faith isn't always **easy**. There are forces that war against glad, loving obedience to God's Word. Love for God doesn't just float into our hearts like a bright, pink glow. Faith is always treasuring Christ more than the **"lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in possessions"**(2:16).

The world is at work. The flesh is at work. The prince of this world is at work full-time. And all of these forces work the same way. They **always** strike at my **loving confidence in God**. They work to make the will of God **seem** like a raw deal - an **unreasonable burden**, or a **fairytale**.

This has **always** been the case. Remember the story of the **Fall**. It's the single most important part of the creation account. It has the most relevance to your life and mine of all the early chapters of Genesis. Think about it. Only one command to be obeyed. How burdensome can that one command be? How hard can it be to enjoy all of God's goodness and vivid personal communion with Him - and the pleasures of His creation without any of the stain of pain or sin? All Adam and Eve had to do was refrain from taking from one tree in the whole garden.

Listen, is that too difficult a command to keep? Is that too restrictive? Is that too much of a burden to bear? You could teach your kids - even your dog - to obey one command, couldn't you? Why did Adam and Eve blow it?

Here's what happened. There came the downward pull from the enemy - that voice to make them resent the loving authority of God. That very same downward pull has now soaked into the world around you. The birth-mark of this world is always the same - it is anything that makes you less trusting that God's way is always the best and most fulfilling is the world.

This is the test for any passion, any recreation, any habit, any impression, any addiction, any amusement, any conversation, any friendship. How do I feel about my quest for God when I'm done with these things? Is my devotion sharper? Is my hunger for communion with Jesus deeper? Do I long for His presence and His people more? Or do I find my joy in other sources? Do I find His laws seem more restrictive? Do my present interests make the ways of God seem dull or distant or irrelevant?

It's important to note that what John means by the "*world*" in verses 4 and 5 is defined by what he said in verse 3. Look at those verses together:

IPAD TEXT - 1 John 5:3 - "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

That's verse 3. Now look at four and five:

IPAD TEXT - "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes *the world*. And this is the victory that has overcome *the world* – our faith. [5] Who is it that overcomes *the world* except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

When you take these verses and piece them together you learn something important. **“The world”** is anything that makes the ways of God seem like a **burden**. **“The world”** is anything that shifts my delight earth-ward or self-ward.

John’s point here is almost **never** taught in church or in Christian homes anymore. And there’s a reason this point is crucially important. The common understanding of **“worldliness,”** though never explicitly stated, is Christians are to **avoid** worldliness, which is true enough. But the impression is often given that God calls us away from the world because He just doesn’t approve of really intense, thrilling, racy fun.

That’s where these verses should shout. John says God calls His children away from the world because there isn’t **enough** joy in it for them. The world is too **empty** - not too **rich**. Like crummy jelly-beans before a rich steak dinner, the world can dull the appetite for God. Make no mistake about it. The forces of the world work to make the things of God irksome, tiresome, restrictive, an interruption of the better things you could have on your own terms.

"Did God really say if you eat that fruit you'll die? He's just holding out on you. That's an unreasonable demand he's placed on you. His commandments are a burden after all."

That's **always** the way the devil and this present fallen world work. You have to constantly **overcome** that lie if you want to stay alive in Christ. That downward pull is as constant as gravity. It comes to everyone. That's why the faith John says we exercise is a **verb** in the **present** tense. This is not just the faith you exercised at some past point when you were first saved. He's talking about the same faith you must call to attention every day as you walk with Jesus.

3) THE PATHWAY TO OVERCOMING THE WORLD IS OUTLINED

IPAD TEXT - 1 John 5:6-12 - "This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; 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. [7] For there are three that testify: [8] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. [9] If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. [10] Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.[11] And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Perhaps your first honest reaction to those verses is like mine. What do these verses possibly have to do with overcoming the world? All this talk about witnesses, water and blood, doctrinal pronouncements about who Jesus is and what He did - I mean there ought to be something about spiritual warfare or something like that.

John is pushing us back to the basics - back to the roots that nourish everything else. I want to wrap this up with two thoughts:

- a) ***You have to be certain you understand the wonderful work Jesus did in dying for you on the cross.***

That's where all those words about coming by ***water and blood*** fit in from **verses 6 to 8**. I still think the best explanation of those difficult verses is water refers to His ***baptism*** and blood refers to His ***atoning death***.

In His baptism Jesus identifies with sinners like me. He had no sins of His own for John to give Him this baptism of repentance, and John recognized this fact and protested. But Jesus made His point. In His coming death he would fully pay for my sin and guilt, so He identified with my sinful need, even in His baptism.

And here's how all of this teaching on Jesus' death and baptism relates to having faith that overcomes the downward, dulling presence of the pull of this world. I think John would tap each one of us on the shoulder and say "If you don't regularly and consistently deeply ponder and value and consider and feed upon Jesus' work as Savior you won't have the fuel to muster up love for God. It's God's *mercy* that *renews the mind*. Without this God's commands will always be a *burden* to you. You will always be easy prey for *temptation* from the devil and your own deceived passions."

Remember - God's grace fuels holiness. We love Him because He first loved us.

b) ***Look out for some of the enemies of true, overcoming faith in Jesus Christ.***

They're not all the same. Sometimes *sorrow* or *loss* can make you doubt God's love or blame Him for what has gone wrong. Far more frequently *prosperity* can jade your spiritual tastes because you don't feel the same sense of need for Jesus when everything is going great. Sometimes *false teaching*, even in some subtle form in the evangelical church, can quietly shift your attention to something other than the magnificent grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I've just been noticing all over again Paul's deep fascination with Jesus as Savior and Lord. Even in the greetings in his letters it's almost as though he can't wait to work Christ's name in. He usually talks about Jesus four or five times in the first couple verses.

And I'm starting to see Paul's **reason** for this approach. In most of those letters he's going to correct, exhort, and talk about growth in holiness and discipline. And he always wants his instruction to be embraced in the light of the "**mercies of God**" they have already received in Christ. That's the **fuel** for the changes to which he will be calling these people.

Isn't this just good sense? Delight in Jesus is what keeps faith alive. It continuously renews the mind. And it overcomes the lies of the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride in possessions. The faith that saves must overcome the whole world – every day. And the **object** of that faith is strong enough to accomplish it.