

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:1-5**

Chapter 25- Overcoming the World

219 Overcoming the World- Part 3

WAOY Friday-Monday 07/11-14/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1 John**, and today we're going to continue to look at what John meant when he said "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world". So, let's read **1John 5:1- 5** again together:

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Now over the last several broadcasts we have seen that John was not teaching that believers escape trouble on this earth- but rather that no trouble that we do face is greater than the victory that has been given to us through Jesus Christ.

Now we must understand that John was *not* teaching about us having a positive mental outlook here or about God's people "speaking a creative Word". Being an overcomer is not about psyching ourselves up or about hypnotizing ourselves into believing something. Repeating a statement over and over again is not manifesting faith- dear friends. Ignoring physical symptoms in your body is not a sign of strong faith. The doctor is not the devil because he gave you the bad diagnosis. And trying to ignore what the x-ray says is not "believing the report of the

Lord”. Good and honorable and faithful and saved people get sick every day. Wonderful saints of God suffer persecutions; they go through trials; and they die every day of the week. And they were not delivered because they had weak faith or because they had sin in their lives or because God was angry at them. That is the single most horrible teaching that exists in the earth today that is right out of hell itself.

Being an overcomer has a lot more to do with us not being bitter when people offend you and not holding their sin against them and being able to honestly forgive them than it does about not going through a trial to begin with. Being an overcomer does not mean that you are exempt from trouble. Overcoming means that when you do suffer- you suffer as a Christian- not like the world- that you suffer with grace- and with hope- fully yielded to God- knowing in your heart and fully trusting that this chastisement is not a sign of God’s displeasure but a sign of God’s Love.

Being an overcomer is not fearing that a man or a nation or an army or a terrorist can kill your body- but true overcoming is fearing God- Who has the power to cast both body and soul into hell fire.

Being an overcomer has to do with very simple and basic things that are often overlooked and many times thought to be not very important. Being an overcomer is about men *abandoning* their own selfish desires and loving their wives like Christ loved the Church. Overcoming is women spending more time talking to God about their husbands than talking to their husbands about God. It is about ladies rejecting what the world has taught them about what it means to be a woman and abandoning themselves into the joy and peace that their femininity brings to them.

Overcoming is children refusing to rebel against their parents but graciously submitting to their authority. It is older women refusing to waste their lives in front of television or reading romance novels and spending time with younger women teaching them how to love their husbands and children. It is older men being sober minded so they can school and mentor younger men on what it really means to be a man. It is about Pastors and Elders loving the sheep enough to teach the Truth of God’s Word instead of tickling their ears with entertainment.

Now I want to show you a very obscure passage that is rarely if ever talked about which gives us one of the best descriptions of this

overcoming that John was talking about here more than just about any other passage in the Bible. Please turn with me to **Hebrews 10:32-34**:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Now as far as I am concerned- this is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible because it gives you a perfect glimpse of what Biblical Christianity and overcoming really is all about. So, let's go over this slowly.

In **Hebrews 10:32&33**, the writer describes a very painful and tragic situation of persecution and imprisonment in the life of this small little church that was in Asia Minor in the first century. This hard time had happened some time ago in the Church that he is writing to, and he wants the people who are in the Church now to remember it. So let's look at this hard time by reading **Hebrews 10:32&33** again together:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

Now these two verses are describing a time of great persecution that had occurred at some point in the past- before the writer wrote this Epistle. Notice here that there are two ways in which they suffered. The people of this Church, in what is modern day Turkey, suffered directly- the writer says in verse 32, "**you endured a great conflict of sufferings**". So obviously some kind of terrible persecution had come to these people.

But the other way that these people had suffered was by *choosing to suffer*- by *voluntarily* choosing to share in the sufferings of others discussed in verse 33- "**by becoming sharers with those who were so treated**"

You see, during the first century if you were punished for being a Christian- your entire family was punished- even the people who associated with you. So it was very common when persecution came to believers for everybody around them to “head for the hills” and abandon those who were being persecuted. Because if you didn’t leave the one they were after- you might be next. Yet we see here that in this small little church- these people did not abandon their brothers and sisters when they came under fire- but the last part of verse 33 says:

... "by becoming sharers with those who were so treated"

So instead of saving themselves- these believers voluntarily joined with those who were being persecuted and proudly and publicly said, *“That is my brother, and I believe what he believes!”* resulting in more hardship for themselves.

And the key question that I am interested in here is just *how* did these younger Christians become the kind of people who would choose to do so that. What would make somebody volunteer for persecutions? Why did they voluntarily join in with those who were being persecuted when so many today would never in a million years choose to do this?

And the answer is given to us in verse 34:

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

So we can see in this verse that the *reason* that the people of this Church were *willing* to align themselves with those who were being persecuted was because these people knew something that others seemingly don’t know. Look at the last part of verse 34 again with me. It says that these people knew:

... that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Now this shows what the persecution and suffering involved and just how the people of this small little Church became sharers with the sufferings of others. Some were literally imprisoned; while others broke out of the prison of apathy and walked away from their comfort and security, and risked everything they owned in this life- including their

lives so that they could be identified with the prisoners. Now this is love! This is zeal! This is compassion! And this is Christianity in motion!

Now what was the result of this great love and compassion as these people left the security of their own lives in order to stand with their brothers in prison? Did God come down and give them twice as much as they had before? Were they rewarded with great outpourings of good things? No. The result was even more persecution. Their property, verse 34 says, was “seized”.

Now it is very possible that this was an official act by the Roman Government. Or it may have been an unofficial act of violence by unbelieving Jews or even by some pagan Gentiles who despised Christianity in general and Christians in particular. But in any case, these Hebrew believers lost some or all of their possessions- and they lost them precisely because they were stirred up to demonstrate godly love and good works.

And this is the very opposite of what many are being taught today in the modern Church- that if you do the “right thing”- then God will bless you and your life will gain from it. That is not true. You are not supposed to do the right thing because you personally benefit from it anyway. You are supposed to do the right thing because you love God and your love for God has taught you to love other people. And so you do the right thing- even if your life gets measurably harder. You do the right thing- even if you are persecuted because of it. You do the right thing- even if you die.

Now as you read this and ponder your own life today, please keep in mind that this is what **1John 5:1-5** tells us that the Church of Jesus Christ is all about. We are to overcome so that we may stimulate one another to love and good works. And here in **Hebrews 10:32-34** is a perfect illustration of what that love and good works look like.

So in the true Church of Jesus- when some suffer- others leave the comfort and security of their *own* lives and they take great risks and they share in the lives of the hurting- even to the point of suffering with them. And this is what the Bible means when it talks about love and good works.

So the question for us is this: Just *how* did these people become that kind of people? What happened to them that allowed them to love like that and what can *we* do be like that? What can we do or stop

doing that will stir each other up to be that kind of people? The last part of verse 34 gives us the answer. The writer says here at the end of verse 34 that the *reason* that these people were willing to leave the comfort and security of their own world and the reason that they were willing to publicly stand beside those who were being persecuted and the reason that they were willing to do these things even to the point of losing their own possessions was because:

... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

First of all notice that choosing to love like this and choosing to suffer like this was not a morose, gloomy, miserable duty that these people carried out simply because Christians are supposed to do this. No, verse 34 tells us very clearly that they did it *joyfully*- that they *joyfully* accepted the seizing of their property because they knew that they had in Heaven a better and a lasting possession! Now this is New Testament Christianity in action and a very good example of what John meant when he said that we have overcome the world!

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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