

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Overcomers

1 John 5:2-5

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Good morning GraceLife. There is nothing that is more vital, more sustaining than a true knowledge of the living God. The prophet Jeremiah, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said this in Jerimiah, chapter 9:

Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. And let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches".

It is as though the very pride of life was being struck at its heart in this passage—wisdom, might, wealth. But he goes on to say:

"But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these things" declares the Lord.

When you know the Lord, you ultimately know how the universe runs and you know how it comes out in the end. Jesus said:

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36)

The rich man who tore down barns to build bigger barns was called to account that night. And Jesus spoke of him and said:

You fool, this very night your soul is required of you.

The knowledge of God worth more than all earthly riches, the knowledge of God worth more than the whole world. And short of the knowledge of God we have nothing, with the knowledge of God we have everything and eternity besides.

And so, having the confidence, having the certainty, having the true possession of the true knowledge of God is most important thing in the world—it is the most important thing in your life, nothing can substitute for it, nothing can take it away when you have it. It is the knowledge of God that lies behind the certainty of the truth that is in our passage this morning. Turn if you would to the book of 1 John, chapter 5. We are going to pick up where we left off last week, 1

John chapter 5. This is a passage that comforts the redeemed for sure. It is a passage that warns those who are still apart from Christ, those who are still in rebellion to Christ.

For those of you that come struggling, discouraged, hearts that are broken, perhaps having neglected the Lord God in your life and finding yourselves in the point of crisis, this passage is an invitation to hope, an invitation to encouragement, an invitation to the way forward regardless of what circumstances may hold for you in the days to come.

1 John 5:1-5, as the Lord beckons to all of us wherever we fit on that spectrum, He beckons to all of us through these words this morning, He says:

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome. But whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now notice as we start looking at this passage that there is a threefold repetition that takes place in verses 4 and 5. It is stated in a positive manner about overcoming the world:

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

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

Overcoming the world, overcoming the world, overcoming the world. And there is something imbedded in that that I wouldn't want you to miss. There is a presupposition that runs through the passage, there is a presupposition that courses through the veins that makes this passage flow, it's the assumption, it's the understanding, it's the certainty that there will be opposition that faces us in this world. There will be trials and challenges and difficulties that seem too great to bear. There will be trials and temptations and oppositions and liars who have a way of shaping the environment in which you live. And in this passage, it is held out the hope that there is victory that overcomes that world. And the question is, where is do these overcomers come from. What is it that makes up these overcomers? Who are the overcomers? Who is it that overcomes the world?

Those of you with the discouraged heart this morning, where is the hope that is the way forward? Something in you says there must be hope somewhere in this dark circumstance—where is the hope for that? This passage lays it out for us. We are going to structure it around three main points—three seems to be the magic number almost whenever I preach, three points here, three points there, but it seems to fit for some reason.

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1. The Source of Our Conversion

First of all, God is the source of our conversion. The one who overcomes is a true Christian and it is only the true Christians who overcome the world. Someone who is not a Christian, no matter (going back to those verses that we opened with) no matter the wealth, no matter the wisdom, no matter the might, no matter the fullness of the world that belongs to them, sooner or later comes to a point where the Lord requires their soul and everything is left looking like foolishness because they did not truly belong to Christ—“You fool, this night your soul is required of you”. Implied in that is that if your soul belongs to Christ, the coming of that moment is the moment of victory, but is not a moment for fear. So the question is, how are we converted from being sinners in to being saints, how is it that we are delivered from this evil world system. Stated differently, how can I be reconciled to God so that I can overcome this world.

In chapter 5:1 you see the first point, the source of conversion. Where is that conversion comes from? What is the source of overcoming? Basically, this is what we looked at last week, look at chapter 5:1 with me, he says:

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

Born of God, the source of conversion is God Himself. And look at what the promise of that is, the source of this conversion is the only thing that can overcome the world. But if this conversion belongs to you, then the outcome is certain. Look at verse 4, they kind of serve as book ends for this passage—verses 1 and 4.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (verse 1)

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world (verse 4)

If you have been born of God, you have overcome the world, you are overcoming the world and you will have ultimate final victory over the world as well. The source of conversion is God Himself.

Last time we showed how it is necessary that salvation must come from God. Man cannot save himself and man is under the wrath of God, under the domination of the world, under the domination of Satan and bound to a heart of sin that has no interest in salvation in itself. And so, if a man is to be saved out of that desperate plight, it is necessary for God Himself to intervene.

If you are here, not a believer in Christ, if you are here, drowning in the depths of storming waters of trial, your cry must go out to God, you must give up hopes of trying to figure this out on your own. Make a cry of plea for mercy to this God who is able to cause you to be born again, this God who alone has the power to overcome the world, you must apply yourself to Him, you must cry out to Him. You must cry out to this Christ, to this Jesus who alone can save. And yet in that plea of mercy that seems at the one hand so desperate, in a plea that in one hand seems so helpless, understand that that plea is the key to unlocking the power to overcome the

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world because when you go to Christ, confessing your sins, pleading His blood as your salvation from sin and you go and you cry out in your desperation to Him, hear the sweet word of promise that Jesus delivers in John 6:37 when He says:

All that the Father gives to me will come to me and the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out.

What a gracious, wonderful promise of salvation to everyone who will humbly come to Christ in order to receive new life, to receive the forgiveness of sin. It is your only plea, but it is a powerful plea because it is rooted in the powerful work of the Son of God.

For those of us that know Christ, what the Bible teaches, what John is saying right here in this passage is that God alone acted in grace to bring about life to you where death reigned before. And so we are left in humility before the this gracious God, we are left in gratitude before this humble God, we recognize that if we are in new life, it is because God had unmerited favor upon us, He showed grace to us in a way that we did not deserve, He showed grace to us in a manner that not all men received, He showed grace to us when we could do nothing to participate in salvation on our own.

And so, going back to what I opened up with, the knowledge of God is the foundation of everything and knowing the truth about your desperate plight and knowing the truth about the saving mercy of God, that is a framing conviction, a framing understanding that shapes the course of the rest of your life. Your life becomes one of humble gratitude to God not a matter of accumulating possessions in this world. Your life becomes a matter of pleasing God not pleasing men, not catering to men, not wanting their favor. And (get this) when your life is framed by the kind of knowledge of God that we are talking about here, the fear of man is utterly removed. When those of greater power, those of greater influence come against you, your position is unchanged. Your position is utterly unchanged because you understand and know that the power of God is at work in your life and will certainly deliver you to the end. And so what can mere man do to you, what can man whose breath is in nostrils, what can man who is headed for the grave do to interfere with the certain work of God in your life that God Himself will certainly accomplish and bring to absolute completion and fruition.

When you know and understand the living God, the God of the Bible, when you know Him through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, you are suddenly living life from a position of strength, not just a position of strength, but of unconquerable strength, come what may. Let the doctor tell you that you have cancer. Let the banker call your mortgage, let friends betray you. Let others disappoint you. Let the daily grind just continue to wear away at you. In the recesses of your heart, because the source of conversion is God Himself and because you know Him, you have a position of strength and a perspective to rise above that all and not be defeated, not to be in despair, but to be an overcomer—that's what this passage is teaching us to do. That glorious power, that glorious hope, that glorious certainty is the birthright of every true Christian, this is the way Christians are meant to live. And John here in this passage is unfolding for us, unpacking for us how we can know that we participated in this life that belongs to us and giving us encouragement about what the final outcome will be. And so the source of conversion is God Himself—that's a little review from last week.

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2. The Sign of Conversion

Now secondly, what John goes on to say here in this passage is he shows us what the sign of conversion is—the sign of conversion. Salvation is not delivered through any religious rituals. You can't say because I am baptized therefore I am saved, I was born in to that church or this family and therefore I am saved. I have done this or that and therefore I am saved. I've done pretty good, the good outweighs the bad and therefore I am saved. None of that is true, all of that is a fruit of the confusing lying work of the devil.

John here gives us what the sign of true conversion is. How can you know that this invisible reality, these spiritual realities belong to you? How is it that you know that you have become a partaker of true salvation?

Listen, it is not that complicated, just go back and remember the character of God, let that be the framing understanding that helps you approach this question, this is what frames the question for you. When you know and understand that God is the God of truth, that God is the God of righteousness and that you know and understand that He is the God of love, all of those things packaged together, not separable, take them or leave them attributes of God, they are all joined together in one indivisible harmony and you know that that is the character of God, then (transition point here) then if you understand that that God has communicated life to you, then you know what to look for, what the signs of having His life would be. It would be a reflection of righteousness in your life, it would be a reflection of love in your life, that would be a reflection of truth in your life because God is love, God is truth, God is holy.

And so the sign of conversion is a transformed character that reflects the character of the God who gave spiritual birth to you. As we have said in the past and is obvious to everyone, the illustrations of this is so simple, children bear physical characteristics of their biological parents. My girls tend to carry the blonde hair and fair complexions of the Green family—for most of them that's true to one degree or another. You can recognize that they are my children because of their physical characteristics that resemble those of the generations of Greens that went before them.

Well, God has woven that in to the fabric to help us understand in part a spiritual truth as well, a more significant spiritual truth. If God has given birth to you spiritually, then the marks and the imprint of His character on your own character is going to be readily evident, they are going to be apparent. God is holy, loving and true and the one who comes from God will reflect those same characteristics and in life, this is what John is saying in this passage. Look at the end of verse 1 through verse 3 with me again. He has been talking about born of God and he talks about this attribute of love at the end of verse 1, he says:

Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments.

Love and obedience woven together in that one verse. And verse 3:

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

Now, we are just taking a 1000 feet look at this passage for now. You see this attribute of truth, God's truth, woven in verse 1:

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

That is doctrinal truth. And if you don't believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God, sent to be the savior of the world, you are not a Christian. He goes on to say that if you have been born of God, you will love the Father and you will love other believers as well. How can you know that that is true? That's a certainty, if God has imparted His life to you, He is going to impart the nature of the life He has within Himself and the love that He had for humanity and that unique love that He has for those who belong to Christ is going to somehow be manifested in your own life—you cannot avoid that conclusion.

And if God is holy and He is, if God is the God of pure, untainted righteousness, God of justice, God of holy righteousness, then somehow that is going to be reflected in your nature as well which is what John is bringing together when he says when we love God and observe His commandments in verse 2, in verse 3, this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. You can't divide and separate out the attributes of God from one another. And here is the significance of that for understanding whether you bear the sign of conversion or not, this is so important. John throughout this letter, chapters 2, 3, 4, he has been going in sort of a spiral nature, emphasizing throughout, at one point emphasizing the truth of obedience is being the mark of the true believer:

If anyone says I have come to know God and does not keep His commandment, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.

He has emphasized the importance of love is being the mark of a true believer, but he says in chapter 2:10:

The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

And he has emphasized the importance of belief, chapter 2:23:

The one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Notice, I really want you to see this. Throughout the book, he has held up and isolated these themes individually and talked about them and explained them in their respective importance. What you have to understand, to really bring the book of 1 John together in your mind and to understand the fullness of the message that it is communicating to us is that those are not alternatives that you look at to the exclusion of the others. Because God is one, He has one unique indivisible essence, when He communicates His life, there is going to be a reflection of

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that which can be communicated from His character communicated in to the very character that you yourself have.

What is the point? While these three tests are distinct, they ultimately cannot be separated, they are woven in to one single fabric and you can't tear one away from the other without ripping the fabric and making it useless. It is like multiple strands of twine that are wound together to form a single rope. So these character traits are so bound together that they form an indivisible unit of assessing the reality of your salvation whether it is real or not.

And I say that in part to encourage you because the tendency among those who move in our circles is to simply focus may be on obedience, or are you obeying the commands of God and you are left looking at the way that you obey God or don't obey God and you never get around to bringing in these other factors that also contribute to the one sign of conversion, they all flow from the new birth, the love of God, the righteousness of God, the truth of God, all flow from the new birth that God imparts in salvation. And so all three are inevitable, inseparable results from the source of that life. If you are serious about examining yourself, you do more than simply look at the five days and say "Have I been generally obedient or not." That's going to lead you down the wrong path, that's too narrow of a perspective. What John teaches us here is to ask ourselves "Is my life marked by obedience? Is my life marked by love? Is my life marked by the truth of scriptures? Are those the framing convictions of my life?" All three of those going together as the inevitable results of the source of the new life.

Now, step back for a moment. When you know God, you understand that, that's just as obvious as the sun and the sky that it would have to be that way that His character would determine the nature of the life that He gives. And if you don't see His character being reflected in your own, if you don't see your character being marked by a desire to know this God, there is no way that His life dwells within you. Conversely beloved, if you see these marks in your life, if you see this sign, three-fold singular sign of life in your life, you can reason back from that and say "You know what? Whatever may be true of all of the false professors sprinkled throughout the world, whatever may be true of the many who will come to the Lord on the Day of Judgment and say 'Lord, Lord...' and you will say 'Depart from me, I never knew you...' Whatever may be true of them, as far as it pertains to me, (you say to yourself) I know my conversion is real and I make no protestation of perfection in my life, but I see an enduring power of the love of truth, I see an enduring affinity to the people of God, I see an enduring bent in my life toward obedience that I prefer obedience to sin even though I struggle and fail some times." That's the mark of true conversion, that's the sign of true conversion, that's what John is telling us to look for because look at what he says in verse 2. He says, by this we know, we know, this is how you know if you have truly been born of God:

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

What he is saying is this, the logic of this, he says if you claim to know God the Father, you claim that you have been born of God, then it is inevitable, it is necessary, there are no exceptions to this, that you will be disposed to love those who have had the same supernatural experience. If you have been born from God and someone else has been born from God, you

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have a natural affinity with them, you have a natural affinity with the collective group of those people who have the same spiritual life that you do, you have too much in common to stand remote from them, to have perpetual ongoing animosity toward the church of God, there is too much common in your spiritual lives for it to be any other way.

Look at chapter 4 just above, you can see how the context led in to John's statement here, chapter 4:20-21:

If someone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. The one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from Him that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Generally speaking, this doesn't mean that there is no conflict in the body of Christ. How much easier it would be to be a pastor, trust me if that were true. If there were no conflict in the body of Christ, you would hardly need a pastor. But he is making a general statement that if we love God who gave us life, we will love those who have the same life. What he is doing here is the apostle John is showing us that the love of God, loving God is inseparably connected to loving His children and is inseparably connected to obeying His commandments. If Jesus said:

Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?

That's the general principle, a general principle of submission and obedience and loyalty to His person. And if that is true, if you truly love Him, you are truly loyal to Him, that's going to be expressed in obedience to His commandments as the general principle.

Now notice this, if that general principle is true in your life, then as a necessary consequence, what will naturally flow from that is that you are going to love the children of God in part because you have that natural affinity through a shared spiritual life, but also because part of the matrix of commandments that God lays upon His people is that they love one another. If you love God, you will obey Him. If you love God, you will understand He commands us to love one another and if you love Him, therefore you will obey that command—there is no broken chain in the logic of that, it is necessarily true and that is what John is laying out to us. If we love God, we will obey Him. What He commands is to love the brethren and so when we love God, you love His children—by nature you love them, out of obedience you love them.

Watch this, this is cool. I have struggled to understand why this is necessarily true, what he says here in verse 2:

By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.

That strikes you strange. I thought loving the brethren in chapter 3:18 said:

Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

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In the context of sharing our goods, sharing our lives with them. Now he is saying something different here, a point that is not emphasized often enough, but I will illustrate it for you and you will see it plainly, he is giving you the converse of this. The original statement is “if you love God, you love His children,” okay, how do I know that I love His children? He says you will know this, you will know that you love them on a horizontal plane when you are loving God on a vertical plane and obeying Him on a vertical plane, you are observing His commandments. Wow, wow, your willingness to embrace sin in your life is a reflection of your lack of love for God’s people. Your commitment to obey God vertically is also an expression of your commitment to love His people. Think about it this way, state it plainly, if you don’t obey God you don’t love His people. How could that be?

Listen, for those of us who truly love God, who truly want to follow Him in our lives and care about the honor of His name, the glory of His name and who have a love for souls that are around us in the community of the body of Christ, in the visible external body of Christ, when you sin, when you embrace the pursuit of sin, you are grieving the people who love you. It is a source of terrible grief to those who love you, who love Christ, who are Christians and are concerned for His glory and hear your profession of Christ and they love you and they want God’s glory expressed in your life. When they see you going out and sinning against God and pursuing sin despite what God would say, it grieves them, it grieves us when we see that, it breaks our heart. The apostle Paul said who is led in to sin without my intense concern. Now understand what is going on here. If you loved, if you truly loved the people of God, if you truly loved them, you would not want to grieve them, you wouldn’t want sin hidden in your life some place that would be a grief to the people that you say that you love. If you really loved them above yourself, you would let go of your sin, you see the two live and die together. You love God, you obey God, it is an expression of love in His people. All I am trying to say is that those two go back and forth together.

Let me illustrate it for you very simply. We have the sad duty from time to time as elders to deal with matters of church discipline and to call people to repentance. You bring two or three and call them to repent, you are living in sin. They say no, no, no I want to keep my sin, and so we read their name to the church. There is no joy in that, the only joy in that is being faithful to Christ who told us to do that, so we are glad as elders to do that in one sense, but it is a grief to our hearts when we do. But there was a time when I was going through the church discipline process with someone (I wasn’t the one being disciplined, mind you, just to make that clear) I was dealing with someone in sin. There was a conversation with a mutual friend, a true believer that I was privy to and that true Christian friend was calling the sinner to repentance, saying “I love you, please stop this, please repent, please come back to Christ.” And the response to that person is a negative illustration of the very point that I am making here. He said “I love you too, but I’m not going to repent. I love you too, but I’m going to keep pursuing this thing that is bringing discipline to me for.”

Listen, understand, I just want you to grasp the principle here. For someone who is in sin to say to a Christian “I love you, but I won’t change” that’s a total lie, that is a total act of deception—deceiving and being deceived. There is no love in that statement at all because if you truly loved that person as a Christian, you would let go of the sin so that they could share in the joy of seeing

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repentance worked out in your life, so that they can see the glory of God worked out in your life and the joy that would come from seeing obedience rather than sin in your life will be overflowing.

When you choose instead to hold on to that sin, when you choose instead to hear the tearful, heart-felt pleas for repentance and say no, there is no love in that. All that is in that is the utter selfishness and self-centeredness of a sin-captivated heart, and that is what John is driving at here. You can't separate a verbal profession of love for Christians and the way you live your life—those two go together. And if you are not willing to obey God in your life, your claimed love for His people is a total fiction. The biography of your life would not be put in the historical fact section, it would be put in historical fiction that it's not true.

And so what we have to do as believers in Christ beloved as we walk through life together in the fellowship of GraceLife and in the broader community of Grace Community Church, what we have to understand is that our personal private lives, the way that we deal with sin are inexorably bound with our relationships and our responsibilities to the body of Christ. Our obedience shows our love for them. When you resist private temptation, when you fight against private lusts, you are expressing not only a love for God, but also a love for His people, we are joined together in that way.

Now understand, we have clarified this so many times, but you can never say it enough, we are not talking about obedience in a sense that this is how we gain God's favor. We are not talking about an obedience that would somehow earn our salvation. The whole presupposition has been that we are lost sinners in a miserable plight and we cannot save ourselves. So we are not talking about how to enter in to the kingdom of God, we are talking about how those who truly belong to the kingdom live once God has given birth to them. And one of the ways that it comes out is that you love His people and you obey God and your obedience to God is a reflection of the sincerity of your love to His people.

In Titus chapter 3, the apostle Paul made that point clear, he said:

God saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit that He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our savior so that being justified by His grace, we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Statement of God's mercy in salvation, not by our works, not by our righteousness, but, listen to what he says in verse 8 when he says:

This is a trustworthy statement and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently so that those who had believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds.

The washing of regeneration leads to a life that is careful to engage in good deeds as the Bible defines them. The sign of conversion is a transformed character. Part of the transformed character is obedience and that obedience is an expression of the sincerity of your love for the

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people of God. We have to think of ourselves as belonging to a community. What you and I do with our lives affects one another. You have responsibilities to the body of Christ to obey God. Now, verse 3:

This is the love of God that we keep His commandments.

We show our love for God by obeying and we show our love to His people by obeying His commandments. But notice his statement at the end of verse 3 as part of the sign of true conversion, he says:

...His commandments are not burdensome.

This is not a heavy weight to those who are truly redeemed. While these commandments are impossible to the unbeliever because he doesn't have any spiritual life in him, they are not burdensome to the true Christian for two reasons.

First of all, when God saves us, He also imparts to us the power to live in obedience to Him. You are converted, you are a new creation, the old things have passed away and part of that new creation is a new set of affections, a new disposition that says "I would rather obey God than sin against Him." And so obedience to His commandments is not a burdensome thing because it is a natural outworking of the new disposition that God gave you in salvation, there is power, there is a new disposition, a new orientation toward Him. You say "This is not burdensome, this is why I exist, how could the expression of the purpose of my existence be a burden to me." So God gives us a power that keeps it from being burdensome.

But not only that, we delight in obeying God out of love for Him. It is not burdensome to obey Him when we love Him, it is not burdensome because we love Him. We are happy to show forth our obedience, we are happy to show forth our love, our life is simply a vehicle and a means by which to obey Him so that we can express the gratitude that we have that He saved us from our miserable plight in sin.

I've often found, and I'll bet you have too, I've often found that the only joy in some circumstances is simply obeying God in them. Dealing with difficult conflict for the sake of righteousness—none of us like that, none of us enjoy that, but there is a joy in it deeper that says "This is just the matter of being faithful to God, I'll rejoice in that. Even if the conflict is heavy, it is not burdensome, it is a delight, easy, clarifying test for the reality of your conversion. Do you resent obeying God or do you rejoice in it? If you resent it, there is a real fundamental disposition problem that should cause you to examine yourself. If you rejoice in obedience despite the troubles, the surrounding difficulties and trials and all that, that's the sign of a regenerate heart, that's the sign of someone who knows God, that's the sign of someone who is going to overcome the world, that's the sign of someone who will be in heaven at the end of the age.

If you reason forward like that, then you come back and you are flooded with joy because there is a whole new perspective on the weight of circumstance that it brings to you.

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3. The Security of Conversion

Thirdly, we talked about the source of conversion, the sign of conversion, finally, the security of conversion. I'll try to make this quick. Look at verses 4-5:

But whatever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

The security of conversion means that everyone who has been born again will overcome the world and will certainly be saved in the end—no one drops out, no one falls through the net, no one slips through the cracks or through the fingers of God. Speaking of the fingers of God, Jesus said "...they are in my Father's hand and no one can pluck them out." And so conversion takes us out of the world and in to the family of God. We have been delivered from darkness to light and that means that happened by the power of God and as He saves us by His power, He imparts an abiding power through the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables us to overcome. Christians overcome the world, Christians have overcome the world, meaning that when you were converted to Christ at the moment of your conversion, there was a decisive principle of victory that was imparted to your life that permanently severed your ties with Satan, the world and with your own dominating principle of sin. There was a final victory, there was a decisive victory and now we are living out in the aftermath and the afterflow of that victory because we can never go back to the realm from which we were saved.

Notice what it says there in verse 4, "Whatever is born of God..." it is a universal principle, a universal victory, whatever has been born overcomes the world is a statement of the divine power of God who saved you at the beginning will ultimately overcome every aspect of the world that hinders you now, it will ultimately be overcome and there will be total complete 100% victory in the end.

I realize for some of you those words come in circumstances where it seems like defeat is all around you—I understand that. But the point of this passage is to bring us hope, is to bring us confidence and don't let the seeming surrounding difficulty of circumstances obscure the great sunlight of hope that is shining in to your life through the word of God here this morning. True faith brings you in to union with Christ and all that hinders you from coming to salvation has already been broken and now it has been broken in the greater sense, these lesser obstacles in the midst of the Christian life will also that which is overcome. It doesn't diminish the difficulty of your trial, it shows that the victory is even more surpassing than you realized before.

You look at the word of God and you say "You mean that there is victory even over this in which I am in the middle of?" And the Bible comes back, Jesus Christ comes back with the resounding yes, there is victory that overcomes even that, it belongs to you, it is yours by divine birthright and it will certainly come to pass. And the serious thinker says "Wow, that changes everything, I'm not sinking in to a deeper hole here, I'm being lifted up." The measure of victory is in part by the foe that you overcome. Jesus said in John 16:13:

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I have spoken to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.

And so visible circumstances may seem to contradict the victory for a time, but you beloved, you look to the unseen things in Christ an appropriate supernatural confidence, that supernatural peace, that supernatural certainty that say “My salvation can never fail because my Christ can never fail and not by my might, but by His, He has brought me to Himself. And just as He went to the cross, in to the grave and rose out of it, I too will walk through tribulation and rise out of it because I belong to Him and He will be faithful to me in the end—God’s own word declares the victory.”

So if the storms of life have pulled you in to their vortex, take heart. The voice that calmed the Seas of Galilee has the same power today to calm the storms of life. Either in time or in eternity, you will know the certainty of victory because whatever has been born of God overcomes the world. No matter what, go in confidence, no matter what, go in peace.

Let’s pray. *Our Father, I know that some of the trials represented in this room are so profound and have been so profoundly discouraging that it seems like everything was collapsing. I pray that you would take these truths from your word and apply them to hearts that we get joy and hope and peace that would show forth the unconquerable glory of your salvation in each one’s life. Father, people that I would name by name if it were only appropriate, I pray for them even now.*

And Father for those who have come feeling the burden that are saying “I look at my life and I’m not in Christ, no wonder it is so miserable for me.” Father I pray that your Spirit would so carefully, so precisely, so gently lead that person to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, that the man Jesus who walked 2000 years ago on this earth, was your own Son, sent in to the world so that we might live through Him, that that Jesus was sent to be the sacrifice for our sins so that our awful guilt against you could be removed and you could forgive us of our sins because Jesus bore the punishment for them. Father I pray for such a one that you would impart life to them, impart this spiritual life that would prompt them to repentance and faith in Christ for the salvation of their souls. And that suddenly the glory of being reconciled with you would surpass all of the troubles that they carried in to their hearts when they walked in to this room.

Thank you for the wonderful nature of your grace and mercy. And Father, for those who are standing strong for Christ or walking with Him as so many in this room are, Father just continue to sustain them, let them go forth with the confidence of ultimate victory and the sense of assurance and the testimony of the Spirit to their own hearts that even now, day by day as they walk in to this life and they are manifesting the victory that Christ won for us at the cross of Calvary. Make us a conquering people Father, not just so that we would live a life of tranquility and apart from trouble, but so that we would show forth the glory of the God who saved us and that the testimony of our lives would so point people to Christ that the identity of our own names will be lost in the wonder and the majesty of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, for it is to Him, from Him and through Him that we live our lives and to His glory and for His honor we pray, Amen.

“Overcomers”

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