

Salvation—Sanctification (16th)

(Today we continue studying the *experimental* aspect of sanctification in the life of the believer as he lives on earth. Today's podcast deals with the topic of a child of grace being an overcomer as seen in the books of I John and Revelation.)

We have studied several passages of the Scriptures that show that we are not only commanded to be holy but we are also to sanctify ourselves as children of God. Furthermore, we have presented various passages that testify to the fact that God not only chastens His children unto holiness but that sin does not have dominion over them because they are “under grace,” cf. Romans 6:14-22. Also, in a previous podcast it was mentioned that the regenerated child of grace is also identified as an overcomer. Today, we desire to examine the topic of being an overcomer further.

The Greek word for overcome is νικάω (nikáō, *nik-ah'-o*) and means “to subdue” and is translated “conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.” Our Lord used this word in His closing remarks prior to His high priestly prayers of John seventeen. He said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,” John 16:33. However, for our purposes we shall limit our study to the books of I John and Revelation. While this word is used twenty-eight times in twenty-five verses, it is used twenty-three times in twenty verses in these two books.

The epistle of I John is one of, if not the most, challenging books of the Bible. While it sets forth identifying marks of a child of grace that is born of God, it equally categorizes those who are of the devil. Nevertheless, in three of the chapters of this epistle, the Christian is classified as being an overcomer, and throughout the book the believer is described as one who lives a holy and righteous life. Make no mistakes about it; he who is born of God is an overcomer.

In I John 2:12-14, all of the children of God are identified as “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers.” (As a side note, the Greek word for “little children” in verse twelve is τεκνίον [tekníon, *tek-nee'-on*] and is used in I John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; and 5:21 refers, I believe, to all of the children of God. The Greek word for “little children” in verses thirteen and eighteen is παιδίον [paidíon, *pahee-dee'-on*] and, I believe, refers to either a young individual who is a believer or a young Christian regardless of his age. That the Holy Spirit inspired John to use these different words, I believe, He intended that we make a distinction between the “little children” in these verses.) Regardless, of the age or class in which a regenerated child of God is found (fathers, young men, or little children), he is an overcomer. Note the reading of these verses: “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” Technically, it only identifies the young men as overcoming “the wicked one”; however, the fathers and little children both know the Father that is “from the beginning.” Nevertheless, from the overall context it seems that the little children, young men, and fathers not only know God but “are strong,” have “the word of God” abiding in them, and “overcome the wicked one.” We have a tendency to make excuses for young Christians whereas God does not at this point. True, we would not expect a younger Christian to be as knowledgeable and skilled in the Scriptures as an older saint, but they are not to be excused for living like the world because of their youth.

The overcomer is mentioned next in this epistle in chapter four and verse four. It says, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” The subject under consideration is false prophets. Here we are told that the children of God that

have the Holy Spirit in them by regeneration do not follow false prophets or teachers. Verses five and six say that the world will hear them, but that “we are of God” and “he that knoweth God heareth us,” but “he that is not of God heareth not us.” This is not because of some superior wisdom or intellect that resides in us that cause us to overcome. No, the only reason that you are blessed to overcome is because “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” As Philippians 2:13 tells us “it is God which” works in us. Yes, we are to study the Scriptures and know the truth of God and obey the gospel and live “holily and justly and unblameably” (I Thessalonians 2:10) in this world. Equally, each child of grace is to be equipped so that he knows the difference between a true and false prophet, but the only reason that one overcomes is because of the inward working of God in His children. We do not go about each day feeling some pulsating energy electrifying us with a supernatural charge that motivates us in the service of God. We daily see ourselves as the Apostle Paul cried out, “O wretched man that I am! . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.” (See Romans 7:14-24) And yet, because of the power of the Holy Spirit living in us we continue day after day, year after year, serving God. Yes, we are not only commanded unto holiness, but the Lord works and perform “until the day of Jesus Christ” that which He has begun in us, Philippians 1:6. May the Lord bless us to say daily with Paul, “Being confident of this very thing.”

Next I direct your attention to I John 5:4-5: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” This passage is too clear and to the point that it hardly needs any comment. Without question God tells us that he that is born of God overcomes the world. Note that it does not say that he *should* overcome the world nor that he *ought* to overcome the world nor that he *may* overcome the world, but it definitely says that he that is born of God overcomes (that is, he does overcome) the world. And while I John 4:4 tells us that we overcome because of “he that is in you” (that is, the Holy Spirit), here we are told that the faith given to us in regeneration is (as James says in his epistle) a living faith that produces good works. (See James 2:17-26.) Furthermore, I John 5:4-5 declare that he that “is born of God” equally believes “that Jesus is the Son of God.”

While we must not seek to list various doctrines or develop a list of guidelines as to how much a child of grace is to believe and know, I believe it is safe to say that he will trust in his heart and soul that his salvation is in the finished work of Christ regardless of what is in his head. While the Scriptures are clear regarding the children of God being overcomers, we must not be guilty of putting each and every individual under our private microscope as to whether he is a genuine believer or Christian or not. No, beloved, that is God’s business. We can only teach and preach the Scriptures as given to us and leave the results with the Lord. And, yet, at the same time, as we have seen, there are some things that are obvious and we must not explain them away or ignore them. God closes out I John reminding us that the born again lives a sanctified life: “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;” (that is, does not practice sin) “but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” I John 5:18.

In closing please allow me to direct our attention briefly to the overcomer as found in the book of Revelation. The Greek word *νικάω* translated overcome is used seventeen times in fifteen verses in this book. The majority are found in chapters two and three in the messages given to the seven congregations. Without going into a detailed study we will summarize by listing the promises given to those who overcome. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” Revelation 2:7. “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death,” verse 11. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*,” verse 17. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star,” verses 26-28. “He that overcometh, the same shall

be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels,” Revelation 3:5. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name,” verse 12. And finally, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne,” verse 21. Then in chapter twelve, we are told that the redeemed “overcame” the “accuser” of the brethren by “the blood of the Lamb,” Revelation 12:9-11. Afterwards, chapter fifteen, verse two declares to us of the saints that got the victory (the Greek word for overcome) “over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name.” The final chapter (chapter 21) closes out by reminding us “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” verse 7.

May we be encouraged that our salvation is so ordained by the Lord that we not only are overcomers as we travel in this low ground of sin and sorrow, but that we shall ultimately be ushered into that glory world where sin, sorrow, and sickness will not trouble us anymore. Our time is up for today. Farewell.