

INTRODUCTION

1. This morning as we return to the Word of God, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John chapter 5.
2. This morning we are looking at verses 1-5.
3. John says, “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?”
4. In the NT, there are many titles that describe the believer.
5. A term that is mostly used is the term Christian.

6. That term is used in Acts 11:26 by pagans, and it means little Christs.
7. We are also in the Scripture called children, children of God, children of light, children of the day, and children of obedience.
8. We are called believers, or the faithful.
9. We are called friends of Jesus Christ.
10. We are called brothers and sisters.
11. We are called sheep.
12. We're called saints, holy ones.
13. We are called soldiers.
14. We are called witnesses.
15. We are called stewards.
16. We are called fellow-citizens.
17. We are called lights in the world.

18. We're called the elect of God.
19. We're called the chosen.
20. We're called ambassadors of Christ.
21. We're called ministers.
22. We're called servants.
23. We're called disciples.
24. We're called heirs.
25. We're called joint-heirs.
26. We're called branches in the vine.
27. We're called members of the body of Christ.
28. We're called living stones by which the temple of God is built.
29. We are called epistles, living letters.
30. We're called temples.

31. We're called beloved.
32. We're called followers. And there are more.
33. And all of those terms and each of those terms give us the definition of who we are.
34. And in a sense it takes all of those terms to express the fullness of what it means to belong to God through faith in Christ.
35. But there's one other title that isn't generally a part of the short list that most of us would refer to, and that is this term that is used a number of times in the text I just read.
36. We are overcomers, twice in verse 4 it identifies us as those who have overcome the world, and then once again in verse 5.
37. We are overcomers.
38. This is a descriptive term.
39. If you would like another term you could use the term victors.

40. If you want yet another term that may be a little more contemporary, you could use the term winners.

41. We are the winners.¹

LESSON

I. The Definition of An Overcomer

Verse 4 tells us:

A. An Overcomer is a Christian

“Born of God” (vv.1, 4)

1. Only those who have been born of God are true overcomers
 - a) John says in verse 1, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.”
 - b) He said in John 1:12-13 (NASB) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/62-36/how-to-recognize-an-overcomer-part-1>

those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

2. Only overcomers identify with Jesus Christ

Jesus said in John 16:33 (NASB) These things 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.”

Jesus, in effect, said, “I have conquered Satan’s system.”

One of the truths about a Christian is that he is in Christ. The Christian is in an indivisible union with Christ Himself and as a result is a partaker of His divine nature. A Christian partakes of everything that Christ is and has, including His inheritance, righteousness, death, life, and Spirit. Since Christ is a victor, Christians partake of His victory. The believer then, is a victor.²

We are victors because Jesus is a victor.

² John MacArthur, John MacArthur Bible Studies: Assurance of Victory, p.9

- a) We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ - Ephesians 1:3 (NASB) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

- b) We have obtained an inheritance in Christ
 - (1) Ephesians 1:10-11 (NASB) In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.

 - (2) Colossians 1:12 calls it “the inheritance of the saints.”

 - (3) Colossians 3:24 (NASB) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

 - (4) Hebrews 9:15 (NASB) For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first

covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(5) 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NASB) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

c) We are given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance in Christ

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NASB) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

3. Only overcomers love one another (v.2)

“By this” - literally “in this.”

“Our perception of the existence of love to our brethren is developed on every occasion when we exercise love and obedience toward God.³

a) God’s Word teaches us to love the brethren

- (1) Paul said to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 (NASB) Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.
- (2) John says that too -- the assurance of salvation is seen in our love for the brethren (1 Jn.3:14).
- (3) “Love” occurs 46 times in 1 John. 4 times he mentions that the one who hates his brother is in darkness (2:9, 11; 3:15; 4:20)

³ Marvin R. Vincent. Vincen’t Word Studies.

(4) “Love” as it is used here in 1 John 5:1
as a present active verb

Not only is an overcomer a Christian but...

B. An Overcomer is a Victor

“Overcomes” (v.4) Greek nikao (verb) Literally, “victor”
(BADG)

The Greeks believed that victory could only be achieved by the gods, not by men. Only the gods were conquerors and unconquerable. The Greek goddess of victory is named Nike.⁴

1. He is a victor over Satan

1 John 2:13 (NASB) I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

One of the things that Christians have overcome is Satan. We are victors over him. It may seem

⁴ Ibid., MacArthur, p.8.

Satan has victory now, but ultimately he won't.⁵

a) Satan's appearance of victory

- (1) Revelation 6:2 (NASB) I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.
- (2) Revelation 13:7 (NASB) It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

b) A Christian's assurance of victory

"But that isn't the whole story. Ultimately, the book of Revelation says the saints are going to triumph over Satan.⁶

- (1) Revelation 12:11 (NASB) And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love

⁵ Ibid., MacArthur, p.9

⁶ Ibid., MacArthur, p.9

their life even when faced with death.

- (2) Revelation 15:2 (NASB) And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.
- (3) Revelation 21:7 (NASB) He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.
- (4) Romans 16:20 (NASB) The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
- (5) 1 John 2:14 (NASB) I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

2. He is a victor over death

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 (NASB) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. He is a victor over the world

a) 1 John 5:4 (NASB) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

b) Galatians 1:3-5 (NASB) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

4. He is a victor over sin

- a) Romans 6:11-14 (NASB) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

- b) 1 John 2:12 (NASB) I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

II. **The Description of An Overcomer**

1 John 5:1-5 lists 3 characteristics that are common of all overcomers:

A. Faith in Jesus Christ (vv.1a, 4)

1. We are overcomers by the act of believing

“Whoever believes”

“Believes” (pisteuo) (pres.act.verb)

Saving faith is the first characteristic of an overcomer. The term “believes” conveys the idea of continuing faith, making the point that the mark of genuine believers is that they continue in faith throughout their life. Saving belief is not simply intellectual acceptance, but whole-hearted dedication to Jesus Christ that is permanent.⁷

2. An overcomer must believe that Jesus the man is God incarnate---the Messiah, King, Savior, Redeemer, and the center and focus of revelation

Daniel Akin says, “John states that all who believe that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., the Messiah) have been born of God. As the book has already indicated, this requirement includes believing specifically that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (4:2), that he is God’s Son, and that he is the Savior of the world (4:14–15).⁸

⁷ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

⁸ Akin, Daniel L. [1, 2, 3 John](#). Vol. 38. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. Print. The New American Commentary.

The Christian's victory is based on the reality that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be.⁹

- a) 1 John 5:1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ."
- b) 1 John 5:4, "...And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith."
- c) 1 John 5:5, "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

John is saying that the basic characteristic of an overcomer is that he believes in Jesus Christ. A believer's faith overcomes the world.¹⁰

B. Love for Jesus Christ (vv.1b, 5)

It is characteristic of overcomers not only to love God but also to love all who are begotten of God. A true believer confesses Christ and loves his brothers.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., MacArthur, p.12.

¹⁰ Ibid., MacArthur, p.12.

¹¹ Ibid., MacArthur, p.13.

1. The new birth brings us not only into a relationship with the eternal Son but into a relationship with the children of the Father as well
 - a) 1 John 5:2 (NASB) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.
 - b) 1 John 3:14 (NASB) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

2. Love is not a sentiment but a sacrificial act

John Trapp said, “Affection without action is like Rachel, beautiful but barren.”¹²

- a) 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NASB) Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes

¹² The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations

all things, endures all things.

- b) John 13:14-15 (NASB) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

- c) Ephesians 5:25 (NASB) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

C. Obedience to Jesus Christ (vv.2-3)

1 John 5:2-3 (NASB) 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.

Faith, love and obedience are all woven together.

John ties obedience to love (v.2)

John times love to obedience (v.3)

John ties faith to love (v.1)

All three are inextricable. Love, faith, and obedience

to God's Word are all characteristic of the believer. But the genuine proof of love is obedience.¹³

1. God wants obedience that is internal -- not externally motivated
 - a) 1 John 4:18 (NASB) There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.
 - b) Romans 6:17-18 (NASB) But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

2. God wants total obedience

Partial obedience does not satisfy God at all. Some people think God is satisfied when they do a few things right and a few things wrong. But He is not going to settle for two out of three. He wants total obedience.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., MacArthur, p.14.

¹⁴ Ibid., MacArthur, p.14.

Joshua 22:1-4 (NASB) Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them, “You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. 3 You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God. 4 And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan.

3. God wants constant obedience

Philippians 2:12 (NASB) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

4. God wants cheerful obedience

a) 1 John 5:3 (NASB) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and

His commandments are not burdensome.

- b) Psalms 119:47-48 (NASB) I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. 48 And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes.
- c) Psalms 119:103 (NASB) How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- d) Psalms 119:127 (NASB) Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.
- e) Psalms 119:140 (NASB) Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it.

CONCLUSION

1. What is an overcomer?
2. An overcomer is a Christian who has been born of God and is a victor over Satan, death, the world, and sin.

3. What are the 3 characteristics that are common of all overcomers?
4. Faith in Jesus Christ
5. Love for Jesus Christ
6. Obedience to Jesus Christ
7. Are you an overcomer?