

MONDAY 07 November 2022 "Overcomers!!" 1 John 5:1-5

Good Monday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*Perhaps you have heard the phrase 'be an **overcomer**'.* It means live your life victoriously, overcoming those things in your life journey which would defeat your motivation or distract you from your objectives or undermine your progress or disqualify you from achievement, or destroy your relationships. Of course, motivational speakers use such phrases and then they point their listeners to the resources which they believe will help them live as an 'overcomer'. For some that is pursuing a solid education, for others it is making right choices, for others it is becoming part of a particular political or special interest group, and for some it is engaging in a particular religious pursuit.

For me, *I have discovered something very exciting as I've had the privilege of visiting Christians in many parts of the world. Living an 'overcoming' life is very possible as you live in a dynamic, authentic, life transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, regardless of your education, your ethnicity, your age or gender, your marital status or even your health or financial situation.* I've met these types of people in several African countries, Asian countries, several European countries, both North and Central America and several Island nations! May I ask. . . *are you an "overcomer"? If not, why not?*

In our journey with the apostle John, we've come to the beginning of his fifth and final chapter in his first letter. As he rolls out his parchments and picks up his stylus, let's watch as he writes to encourage Christians all around the Roman Empire in the later part of the first century. *I think John is trying to help his readers understand how they can be 'overcomers' in a very difficult time in human history.* Persecution of Christians was rampant in every part of the Empire. John is writing: **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...This is love for God: to obey His commands. And God's commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God OVERCOMES the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our FAITH. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."** (1 John 5:1-5)

It's not difficult for us to imagine how encouraging these words sounded in the ears of those who heard them read in the tumultuous, very difficult, first century. For Jewish people, both in the first century and today, John's first statement was very clear and very challenging: **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."** Why? *Because the word "Christ" means "Messiah".* Most all the Jewish prophets in the Old Testament urged the Hebrews to anticipate the arrival of "the Holy One of Israel", "the Anointed One" whom God would send as their Savior, their Redeemer and their leader. Most Jews understood this to be an exclusive promise of God for Jews, not available to Gentiles. Many Rabbi's and other Hebrew scholars had, through their teachings, shaped an expectation among Jews that this "Messiah" would be a powerful political leader who would rally the people to invincible and powerful unity overcoming any and all opposition, restoring Israel to regional and perhaps global dominance as in the days of King David and King Solomon.

For that reason, as Jesus appeared on the scene, almost immediately He was discounted as not being qualified to be Messiah! He'd been born in a stable, of all places, not a palace. His poor family had been refugees in Egypt, fleeing Herod's soldiers. He was raised in the back-water town of Nazareth which led Nathaniel to respond incredulously when Philip said to Nathaniel: **"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth... Nazareth!? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** Nathaniel said, John 1:45,46.

So here, John is making it very clear for all Jews... *Salvation is only possible through Jesus and discounting His being their Messiah rejects God's provision, God's fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and declares Jesus to be a liar!* For when speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well, in response to her statement: **"I know that Messiah is coming and when He comes, He will explain everything to us."** Jesus then declared to her: **"I who speak to you am HE!"** (John 4:25,26) So John is calling out every Jewish Christian to courageously, unequivocally declare Jesus is their **"Christ"** and their Savior!

Please notice John very clearly calls all believers in Jesus, Jews and Gentiles, to live their lives obedient to the teachings of Jesus which echo the commands of God in the Old Testament. Why? Because God the Father and God the Son speak identical truth, because as God spoke through the prophet Malachi 3:6 **"I the LORD do not change"**. So, John wrote: **"This is love for God: to obey His commands. And God's commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God OVERCOMES the world."** Now as the people heard John say, **"God's commands are not burdensome"**, I imagine they rubbed their foreheads and at least said in their hearts, if not out loud: *'now wait right there John. None of us, no matter how hard we try, are able to keep all God's commands, and fulfill every detail of the law. We've tried, it's impossible!'*

Oh, that was so true, and everyone knew it! But Jesus had come to fulfill the entire law and become the only, pure, atonement sacrifice for our redemption, freeing us from the sacrificial system and inviting us into a love relationship with God not defined by laws and traditions but by our freedom from our sin and the indwelling Holy Spirit who guides us in living God honoring lives EVERYDAY!

That's why John could write **"God's commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God OVERCOMES the world."** **We, redeemed followers of Jesus Christ, can live as 'overcomers' because Jesus has overcome!** Jesus defeated sin, Satan and death, and the resurrected Jesus is our Savior, our King and we live free from sin bondage, free from sin condemnation, and *we live OVERCOMING sin temptation everyday through the power of the Holy Spirit of God within us!*

Now ponder that a moment friends, and let me ask one simple question: *does that describe you and how you live each day?*

In closing let's celebrate that final statement of John's: **"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our FAITH. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."** (1 John 5:4,5) John is calling us to celebrate the power of FAITH in God, FAITH in His Son Jesus Christ our Savior! Faith... is one of the great hallmarks of Christianity and it's why it is called our 'Christian Faith'. The apostle Paul wrote it this way: **"For it is by grace you have been saved through Faith, and that not of ourselves it is the gift from God, not by works, so that no one can boast."** (Eph. 2:8,9) Our faith in God's Grace extended to us in Jesus; and God's promise that He will accept the atonement death of Jesus on the cross as payment in full for our sin; and our faith that Jesus Christ really did die on that cross and was raised to life again; and our faith in the life transforming work of the Holy Spirit in us. . . *THAT is what accomplishes our Salvation my friends!*

That great, almost incomprehensible salvation work accomplished in us by God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, then transforms us into overcomers as we live by faith each day that the Holy Spirit will warn us when temptation is coming our way and He will empower us to victoriously resist that temptation *so we can live overcoming the effects of the wicked world in our lives, our marriages, our families, and in the marketplace, the classroom, the courtroom and any other place we find ourselves in the normal daily walk of life.*

That's why I call our time together each day "Walking with Jesus". Because through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit we can truly live each day what John wrote: **"This is love for God: to obey His commands. And God's commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God OVERCOMES the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our FAITH. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."** (1 John 5:1-5) Now that my friends, is worth celebrating, do you agree? And here's a song to help us celebrate the overcoming life Jesus makes possible for you and me:

Today's Scripture is 1 John 5:1-5.