

Theme: Letters to the Churches: What is the Lord saying to us? **Topic:** Victory by faith in Jesus

Main Text: 1 John 5: 1 – 21

Key verse: 1 John 5:4: *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. (NKJV)”*

INTRODUCTION: Belief in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Son of God sets Christianity apart from every other religion, philosophy, or system of belief. Those who believe that Jesus is God’s son are “overcomers”. Whoever places faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour has been born again and, as a result, is an overcomer. The word for overcomer is rooted in a Greek word meaning “to conquer”, “to have victory”, “to have superiority or conquering power”. The word in the original language conveys the idea that believers have continued victory over the world. An overcomer is characterised by saving faith in Jesus, love for God and other believers, and obedience to God’s commands. Faith, love, and obedience, which have been consistent themes in 1 John, exist in a mutually dynamic relationship in the believer: the proof of genuine love is obedience, and the proof of genuine faith is love. Spiritual rebirth enabled by Jesus and wrought by God through His Holy Spirit taking up residence in the believer (John 3:5-7), empowers the believer to love God, love Jesus, love other Christians, to obey God, and overcome Satan’s worldwide system of deception. A born-again Christian, as the Bible defines them, is an overcomer, whether they feel or even know it. Of course, to enforce our victory, we must know we are victorious; hence, the vital importance of knowing our Bible.

1. (a) What does it mean to be “born of God”? (v1) (b) Read John 14:6; Acts 2:36, 4:12. How would you respond to a person who challenges Jesus as the only way to God? (c) What does it mean that faith “overcomes the world”? (vv 4-5)

Apostle John emphasises the certainty of God’s witness, or testimony, about Jesus. God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, bear witness that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God. Any who does not believe that is calling God a liar. This is not the opinion of a man or a church denomination; it is the word of God. It is a matter of eternal significance: the one who believes God’s testimony has eternal life; the one who does not believe does not have eternal life because he does not have the Son. The division is stark. To counter the false teachers of his day (and, sadly, of ours too), John gives two kinds of testimony. Firstly, he affirms the baptism (water) and crucifixion (blood) of Jesus, which had been challenged by false teachers questioning the deity of Jesus. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit testified to the Son (Matt. 3:16,17). The death of Jesus also bore witness to who He was (Matt. 27:54, Heb. 9:14). Secondly, Apostle John writes of the internal witness to the Son within the believer’s heart (1John 5:10-12, Rom. 8:15, Gal.4:6). Eternal life is having an intimate, personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son (John 17:3); it begins when we put our faith in Christ and continues into eternity after physical death. Only Jesus can give eternal life, intimacy with God, and the assurance of heard and answered prayers - when we are in the will of God.

2. (a) What does John mean by “water and blood”? In what way are they witnesses? (v6) (b) Why does John contrast God’s testimony with man’s? v9 (c) Read 1 John 4:1,5; Matthew 24:24-25. What is the danger we face in not actively debunking the lies of the world?

Apostle John concludes his letter with a discussion on assurance and certainties that encourage confident Christian living. The phrase “we know” or something like it occurs seven times in this final chapter, six of them in verses 13 to 21. The five “certainties” or “confidences” of a true Christian are: certainty of eternal life (v13); certainty of answered prayer (v14-17); certainty of victory over sin (v18); certainty of belonging to God (v19); and the certainty of Christ being the true God (v20). A Christian, grounded in these truths, does not need motivational teaching. In his discussion on prayer, the Apostle refers to “sin leading to death”. The passage does not specify whether it is physical or spiritual death. This has led to much debate. Some have assumed that the Apostle is referring to spiritual death but given that he dealt with eternal life a few verses earlier, that cannot be said with certainty. Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 5:5, and 11:30 record examples of sins leading to the physical death of believers. Whatever the sin leading to death may be, we should not lose sight of the Apostle’s key point, that we should pray with confidence for brethren that we see sinning a sin *not* leading to death: that would be an act of love in accordance with God’s will, and therefore we can be sure that He hears us. John ends his letter with a call to vigilance. The “certainties” are premised on the condition that we remain in His will. That requires that we be intentional and vigilant.

3. (a) Read 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2; 1 John 2:18-19. If we know we have eternal life (v13), why do people depart from the Christian faith? (b) Why does John end abruptly with “keep yourself from idols”? What are modern idols that may draw believers from the true God?

Prayer: *Father, we thank You for Your Son Jesus Christ, who has opened the way for us to know You, the one true God, live in fellowship with You, and partake of Your gift of eternal life. Amen.*