

# 1 John 5:4 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
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Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

**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:**

**Greek** - hoti pan to gegennemenon (RPPNSN) ek tou theou nika (3SPA1) ton kosmon kai aute estin (3SPA1) e nika e nikesasa (AAPFSN) ton kosmon e pistis hemon

**Amplified** - For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith.

**NET** - because everyone who has been fathered by God conquers the world. This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith.

**Wuest** - Because everything born of God is constantly coming off victorious over the world. And this is the victory that has come off victorious over the world, our faith.

- **Whatever** - 1Jn 5:1 3:9
- **overcomes**: 1Jn 5:5 1Jn 2:13-17 1Jn 4:4 John 16:33 Ro 8:35-37 1Co 15:57 Rev 2:7,11,17,26 Rev 3:5,12,21 12:11 15:2
- [See comments on Born Again](#) in John 3
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **OUR VICTORY OVER THE WORLD OUR FAITH**

**For (gar)** is a **term of explanation**. Always pause to ponder "What is the writer explaining?" John has just spoken of God's commandments as not burdensome and now explains why they are not burdensome. As **Wuest** observes that "The reason why God's commandments are not burdensome is that obedience to them enables the saint to overcome the world." ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

**THOUGHT** - Are you overcoming the world as you read these words or does it feel like the world system headed by Satan is overcoming you?! If it is the latter, could it be that you are neglecting some point of obedience you know you should obey? For example, is there someone that you are steadfastly refusing to show (bestow, freely give) forgiveness? If so, than you can rest assured, you are failing to live like an overcomer and it would not be surprising if you felt like the world was overcoming you! To obey is the way of divine blessing. Confess. Repent. Obey. Walk in victory! For example, ask God's Spirit to enable you to forgive supernaturally, because this is not something that comes naturally to our fallen (even "redeemed, fallen" flesh)!

**Arthur Pink** on **for** and **whatever** - 1John 5:4 opens with "**For**," which intimates the reason why that to the regenerate the commandments of God "are not grievous" (1 John 5:3) Why "**whatever**" rather than "**whoever**"? The people spoken of are the regenerate, and "**whatever**" is used because it takes in **whatever** may be their station or situation in this life. Whoever is born of God, no matter what his rank or situation, "overcomes the world." Regeneration is wrought equal and alike in all, and it produces the same fruits and effects in all—as it respects the essentials of godliness. It is not drawn forth into exercise and act in all alike, for there are particular duties to be performed and particular graces to be exercised—according to such times and places as are personal—but not universal—as, for example, one called to endure martyrdom. But "**whatever** [person] is born of God [no matter how distinguished from others by His providence] overcomes the world."

**NET Note** says "The explicit reason the commandments of God are not burdensome to the believer is given by the (hoti) clause at the beginning of 5:4. It is because "everyone who is begotten by God conquers the world." All believers are positionally overcomers but when we obey we are experiential overcomers and this is why His commands are not burdensome. ([NET Note](#))

**Rosscup** observes that "The **for** which connects 1Jn 5:4 with 1Jn 5:3 links overcoming in 1Jn 5:4 with obedience through love in the Christian life that follows one's initial act of faith and his new birth." ([The Overcomer of the Apocalypse](#))

**Born of God** - NET version gives the anthropomorphical rendering "fathered by God" which carries on John's image in the Gospel - "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, [even] to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

**Born** ([1080](#))(**gennao** from **genos** = offspring, in turn from ginomai = to become) means to beget, to bring forth, to give birth, to procreate a descendant, to produce offspring, to generate. To beget is spoken of men (Mt 1:2-16), whereas to bear is spoken of women. The passive voice means to be begotten or to be born. Note that born is in the **perfect tense** signifying the permanent effect of the (new) birth. In other words, everyone God has saved in the past continues to give evidence of that fact in the present and will continue to do so in the future. So even the truth about the tense of the verb undergirds the doctrine of [Eternal security](#)! Once saved, always saved! The caveat of course is one must be genuinely saved! Asking Jesus into one's heart and living the rest of your life like the devil is absolutely not evidence of genuine salvation! Do not be deceived, dear reader! Many in America claim they are Christian but have no fruit in their life to validate their claim. For them eternity is far from secure!

**Wuest** adds that "**Born** is again **perfect tense**, referring to a past completed act of regeneration with the present result that that regenerated individual has been made a partaker of the divine nature and as such is a child of God (2Peter 1:4-**note**, John 1:12 "sons," **tekna**). ([Word Studies](#))

**Overcomes** ([3528](#))(**nikao**) means to conquer, to be victorious or to prevail in the face of obstacles. Overcome describes the quality of a true saint who may stumble and fall but who God always picks up and he continues onward and upward in the power of the

Spirit and motivated by victory Christ has won for us on the Cross. Nikao implies there is a battle and in context the enemy is the world system opposed to God and His Son Jesus and all of the disciples of Jesus (that's us beloved)! [Wuest](#) adds that "the forces of the world-system of evil, the flesh (totally depraved nature), the devil, and the pernicious age-system (zeitgeist German) with which the saint is surrounded, are all engaged in a battle against the saint, carrying on an incessant warfare, the purpose of which is to ruin his Christian life and testimony."

**Nikao** is in the **present tense** which identifies [Born Again](#) ones as continually overcoming (at least they have that potential to overcome) the fallen world. [Wuest](#) comments that the **present tense** describes believers as "constantly overcoming the world. It is a habit of life with the saint to gain victory over the world. To go down in defeat is the exception, not the rule."

**THOUGHT** - Do you feel like you are an overcomer or like the world has "overcome" you? If the latter describes you, then you are not living in God's provision of power and freedom of the new birth. Ask yourself if there some point of disobedience in your life? Is there some sin which you need to confess and repent?

## Related Resource

- [1 John 5:4 Victory over the World](#)

**MacArthur** notes that the verb **nikao** was popular "among the Greeks, who believed that ultimate victory could not be achieved by mortals, but only by the gods. They even had a goddess named Nike, the goddess of victory who aided Zeus in his battle against the Titans. Against that pagan backdrop, it was stunning for the New Testament to assign to Christians the invincibility associated only with the gods." ([1-3 John- MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**NIDNTT** writes that "John sums up the forces opposed to God in the term kosmos (world). Jesus' coming, suffering and return to the Father signify victory over the world. This victory is expressed in the perfect tense (Jn. 16:33). The evil one, the ruler of this world, has had his power restricted by Jesus Christ, in that Jesus, as the stronger man, has freed his people from the dominion of the evil one. The battle has thus been decided, even if it is not yet over. By faith Christians participate in this victory and are thus placed in a position to overcome the world for themselves. Faith is the victory over the world (1 Jn. 5:4f.; 1Jn 2:13f.; 1Jn 4:4f.).

In the **Revelation** Jesus promises **special blessings on those who overcome** (not a special group, but a description of believers). **May these priceless precious promises motivate in all of us an intense heart desire to zealously guard God's commandments during the remainder of our short time on earth! Amen!** The benefits of so doing are "out of this world." (so to speak!) And notice that every use of **nikao** in description of the **overcomers** (and all seven churches have **overcomers**) is in the **present tense** signifying that these saints are continually living victoriously in even in the midst of tribulations and hostility toward Christianity.

Rev 2:7-[note](#) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who **overcomes**, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.'

Rev 2:11-[note](#) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who **overcomes** shall not be hurt by the second death.'

Rev 2:17-[note](#) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who **overcomes**, to him I will give [some] of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Rev 2:26-[note](#) 'And he who **overcomes**, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;

Rev 3:5-[note](#) 'He who **overcomes** shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

Rev 3:12-[note](#) "'He who **overcomes**, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev 3:21-[note](#) 'He who **overcomes**, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

**Nikao** - 28x in 24v and 24 of the uses are by John - Luke 11:22; John 16:33; Ro 3:4; 12:21; 1 John 2:13f; 4:4; 5:4-5; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7

As **Paul** declared "may it never be that I should boast, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the **world** has

been crucified to me, and I to the **world**." (Gal 6:14-note) Paul said he was "dead" to the world, and this would be a chorus every believer should "sing!"

Indeed, **Paul** asks "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Expects a negative reply!) Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer** (**hupernikao** ~ believers are "super-conquerors") through Him (Jesus is the key! It is "through Him") Who loved us (How? By giving His life for us on the Cross!). For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing (Including NOTHING in this godless world!), shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro 8:35-39-note)

In Romans 12 Paul exhorted the saints at Rome "**Do not be overcome** (**present imperative with a negative**) by evil, but **overcome** (**present imperative** = command to continually overcome - only possible as we rely on the enabling power of the indwelling Spirit) evil with good." (Ro 12:21-note)

**The victory that has overcome the world - our faith** - "This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith." (NET); "And this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith." (Common English Bible).

**Victory** (3529)(**nike**) means overcoming of an enemy or antagonist. Nike means "victory, or the power that confers victory." (NIDNTT). This is the only NT use.

**BDAG** - victory, then as abstract for concrete - the means for winning a victory (but cp. also the custom of speaking of the emperor's nike; '*victoria*' as attribute of the emperor on coinage)

**Webster** - Conquest; the defeat of an enemy in battle, or of an antagonist in contest; a gaining of the superiority in war or combat. Victory supposes the power of an enemy or an antagonist to prove inferior to that of the victor. Victory however depends not always on superior skill or valor; it is often gained by the fault or mistake of the vanquished. The advantage or superiority gained over spiritual enemies, over passions and appetites, or over temptations, or in any struggle or competition.

**NIDNTT** on **nikao** and **nike** in the OT - nikaō is used in the LXX almost exclusively to denote victory over hostile powers. The real victor is God, who has power over his own enemies and those of his people and of the righteous (1 Chr. 29:11; cf. Ps. 51:6). The people's victory does not primarily depend upon the strength of their soldiers but upon whether God has delivered the enemy into the hands of the Israelite armies (Jdg. 7; 1 Macc. 3:19). For this reason the rallying cry for the "Holy War" in Maccabean times was "Victory with God!" (2 Macc. 13:15). Finally, the faith of Israel waits and prays for the time when God will defeat all the enemies of the people. In the wisdom literature the word victory acquired a spiritualized metaphorical meaning. The wise man does not allow himself to be conquered by the beauty of an adulteress (Prov. 6:25), but rather reason overcomes instinct (4 Macc. 3:17; 6:33).

**Nike** is found only twice in the the Lxx - 1Chr 29:11 and Pr 22:9. The majority of uses are in the Apocrypha - 1 Esd 4:59; 1 Macc 3:19; 2 Macc 10:28; 13:15; 15:8, 21; 3 Macc 3:20; 4 Macc 7:3

**Matthew Henry** - Self-denial is required, but true Christians have a principle which carries them above all hindrances. Though the conflict often is sharp, and the regenerate may be cast down, yet he will rise up and renew his combat with resolution. But all, except believers in Christ, are enslaved in some respect or other, to the customs, opinions, or interests of the **world**. Faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armor by which we overcome. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and in opposition to the **world**. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts by which the **world** obtains sway and dominion over souls. It has the indwelling Spirit of grace, which is greater than he who dwells in the **world**. The real Christian overcomes the world by faith; he sees, in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this **world** is to be renounced and overcome. He cannot be satisfied with this **world**, but looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing toward heaven. We must all, after Christ's example, overcome the **world**, or it will **overcome** us to our ruin.

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## THE NEW BIRTH: ITS EVIDENCES AND RESULTS 1 JOHN

The Apostle John does not point out in this Epistle how regeneration can take place, because that he had already done in his Gospel, particularly John 1:12, 13+, and the whole of chapter 3. Here in his Epistle he points out the proofs whereby we may know we are born from above.

I. **Faith** is both the condition and the proof of regeneration. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1+).

II. **Love**. "Every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7+).

III. **Life**. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (margin, "practice") sin; or as W., "No one who is a child

of God is habitually guilty of sin" (1 John 3:9+). This is to say, one of the clearest proofs of the new birth is to be found in the fact that a new life is begun. Not a life of sin as before, but a life of victory—there may be, there usually is, especially in the early days, lapses into sin, but not a life of sin. By and by we learn the secret of full victory.

IV. **Overcomes.** "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4+).

V. **Kept.** "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but He that was begotten of God (i.e., the Lord Jesus) keepeth him" (1 John 5:18+, R.V.). The begotten one is kept by the only Begotten of the Father. And the result?

VI. **Holiness.** Personal holiness. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29-).

([James Smith - Handfuls on Purpose](#))

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**World** ([2889](#))(**kosmos** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to order or adorn) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. Kosmos refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. In the NT kosmos can have a variety of meanings, but in the present context kosmos defines the world not as a neutral influence but as an "evil force", the inveterate, incorrigible, intractable, intransigent, irrevocable enemy of God and of every believer. **Kosmos** includes the ungodly (unsaved) multitude, the whole mass of men alienated from God and hostile to Him and His Son Jesus Christ (See also [Earth Dwellers](#), the synonymous term used by John in The Revelation of Jesus Christ). This meaning describes the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that excludes God. (E.g., Just mention the name "Jesus" in a positive sense in a secular setting! You can "feel" the hackles rising up on the back of their necks!

**Marvin Vincent** writes that **kosmos** is "The sum-total of human life in the ordered world, considered apart from, alienated from, and hostile to God, and of the earthly things which seduce from God (Jn 7:7; 15:18; 17:9, 14; 1Co 1:20, 21; 2Co 7:10; Jas 4:4)." ([Word Studies in the New Testament](#))

**Arthur Pink** - The "world" is in direct antagonism to God and His people, and we may detect its presence and identify it with certainty **by perceiving the effect it produces on our hearts** in this way: The world is that which ministers to the carnal nature—be it people or things—and which tends to render obedience to God irksome and unpleasant. **Any one or any thing which draws your heart away from God and His authority, is for you "the world."** Whatever lessens your estimate of Christ and heavenly things, and hinders practical piety is, for you, "the world"—be it the cares of this life, riches, receiving honor from men, social prestige and pomp, the fear of man lest you be dubbed "peculiar" or "fanatical" is, for you, "the world"—and either you *overcome* it, or it will fatally *overcome* you.

**David Smith** says **kosmos** is "the sum of all the forces antagonistic to the spiritual life." ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Trench** summarizes the definition of the anti-God **world** system as "All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale."

Jesus prayed to His Father "But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the **world**, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. "I have given them Thy word; and the **world** has hated them, because they are not of the **world**, even as I am not of the **world**. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the **world**, but to keep (**tereo**) them from the evil [one.]... 18 As Thou didst send Me into the **world**, I also have sent them into the **world**... 21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, [art] in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the **world** may believe that Thou didst send Me." (Jn 17:13-15, 18, 21)

**W Hall Harris** has this note on **kosmos** - The central passage in the Johannine Epistles that deals with the believer's relationship to the **world**... is undoubtedly 1John 2:15-16. Here it seems clear from the context that the negative aspect of the term kosmos is in view, since the readers are being warned not to "love the world" (this is in stark contrast to the author's opponents, who apparently do "love the world"). In 1Jn 2:15-16 the author presents his readers with only two alternatives: Either one loves "the Father" or one loves "the world," in which case "the love of the Father is not in him." (Read the full article [An Out-of-this-World Experience- A Look at kosmos in the Johannine Literature](#))

**Kosmos** in John's writings (>50% of all NT uses) -

John 1:9-10, 29; 3:16-17, 19; 4:42; 6:14, 33, 51; 7:4, 7; 8:12, 23, 26; 9:5, 39; 10:36; 11:9, 27; 12:19, 25, 31, 46-47; 13:1; 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 30-31; 15:18-19; 16:8, 11, 20-21, 28, 33; 17:5-6, 9, 11, 13-15, 18, 21, 23-25; 18:20, 36-37; 21:25, 1 Jn 2:2, 15-17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3-5, 9, 14, 17; 5:4-5, 19; 2Jn 1:7; Rev 11:15; 13:8; 17:8

**J C Ryle on the world** - By "the world," be it remembered, I do not mean the material world on the face of which we are living and moving. He who pretends to say that anything which God has created in the Heavens above, or the earth beneath, is in itself harmful to man's soul — says that which is unreasonable and absurd. On the contrary, the sun, moon, and stars — the mountains, the valleys, and the plains — the seas, lakes, and rivers — the animal and vegetable creation — all are in themselves "very good." (Genesis 1:31.) All are full of lessons of God's wisdom and power, and all proclaim daily, "The hand that made us is Divine!" The idea that "matter" is in itself sinful and evil — is a foolish heresy. When I speak of "the world" in this paper, I mean those people who think only, or chiefly, of this world's things, and neglect the world to come — the people who are always thinking . . . more of earth than of Heaven, more of time than of eternity, more of the body than of the soul, more of pleasing man than of pleasing God. It is of them and their ways, habits, customs, opinions, practices, tastes, aims, spirit, and tone — that I am speaking when I speak of "the world." This is the world from which Paul tells us to "Come out — and be separate." (2 Cor 6:17-18) (From his sermon "[The World](#)")

**Attachment to Christ is the secret of detachment from the world.**

**Has overcome (nikao)** is in the **aorist tense**, whereas the first use is **present tense**. Overcomes (**present tense**) signifies the fight is in progress, continual and ongoing whereas has overcome (**aorist tense**) signifies that the triumph is assured (cp similar pattern in Rev 3:21-[note](#) - first "overcomes" = present tense, second of Jesus = aorist tense). At the end of His time with the disciples as He prepared them for the crisis of the Cross and His departure, He ended the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-16) with this assurance - "These things I have spoken to you (What things? John 13-16), that in Me you may have peace. In the **world** you have tribulation, but **take courage** (**present imperative** = keep on doing this - only possible as we learn to lean on the Spirit of Jesus); I have **overcome** (**nikao** in the **perfect tense** signifying permanence of His triumph over) the **world**." (Jn 16:33) Beloved, it may look like the evil world system is winning, but Jesus wants His disciples to know that victory is assured in the end. We have not yet seen the end of this story!

**Smith** says "**Our faith** conquers the world by clinging to the eternal realities... His (John's) doctrine therefore is that faith in the Incarnation, believing apprehension of the wonder and glory of it, makes easy the commandments of God, i.e., love to God and love to one another. The remembrance and contemplation of that amazing manifestation drive out the affection of the world and inflame the heart with heavenly love." ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Vincent** says, "Our faith is embraced in the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." ([Word Studies in the New Testament](#))

**Wuest** commenting on **Vincent's** remark notes that "This (i.e., *the confession...* ") is brought out in 1Jn 5:5, in the question, "Who is he who is constantly conquering the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" A heart belief in the incarnation with all that that implies results in an individual who gains the victory over the world. ([Word Studies](#))

## **JOHN PIPER SUMMARIZES JOHN'S EVIDENCE OF NEW BIRTH**

I think God wants the totality of this book to have its impact on us. It is dominated by the concern to give **tests of life** or effects and evidences of the new birth. He gives at least eleven evidences that we are [Born Again](#). We could probably boil them all down to **faith** and **love**. But for now let's let them stand the way he says them. Here they are:

### **1. Those who are born of God keep his commandments.**

1 John 2:3-4-**note**: "By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

1 John 3:24-**note**: "Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him."

### **2. Those who are born of God walk as Christ walked.**

1 John 2:5-6-**note**: "By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

### **3. Those who are born of God don't hate others but love them.**

1 John 2:9-**note**: "Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness."

1 John 3:14-**note**: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death."

1 John 4:7-8-**note**: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

1 John 4:20-**note**: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar.”

#### **4. Those who are born of God don’t love the world.**

1 John 2:15-**note**: “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

#### **5. Those who are born of God confess the Son and receive (have) him.**

1 John 2:23-**note**: “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

1 John 4:15-**note**: “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

1 John 5:12-**note**: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

#### **6. Those who are born of God practice righteousness.**

1 John 2:29-**note**: “If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

#### **7. Those who are born of God don’t make a practice of sinning.**

1 John 3:6-**note**: “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.”

1 John 3:9-10-**note**: “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”

1 John 5:18-**note**: “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.”

#### **8. Those who are born of God possess the Spirit of God.**

1 John 3:24-**note**: “By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

1 John 4:13-**note**: “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

#### **9. Those who are born of God listen submissively to the apostolic Word.**

1 John 4:6-**note**: “We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

#### **10. Those who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ.**

1 John 5:1-**note**: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”

#### **11. Those who are born of God overcome the world.**

1 John 5:4-**note**: “Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

**Two Wrong Conclusions** - One of the effects of all those “tests of life” is to overwhelm us with the sense that John may be saying: “If you’re born again, you’re perfect. If you’re born again you don’t sin at all. There is no defeat in the Christian life. There is only victory.”

Another effect that these tests might have in our minds is to make us think we can lose our salvation. That is, we can be born again for a while and then begin to fail in these tests and die and lose the spiritual life that we were given in the new birth.

**Two Key Clarifications** - John is very aware that his words could be taken in these two wrong ways. So he is explicit as any writer in the New Testament that this is not the case: Christians are not sinless, and born-again people cannot lose their spiritual life and be lost.

He says in 1 John 1:8-10-**note**, “If we say we have no sin [present tense], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we



confess our sins [present tense], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." So John is at pains to say that "walking in the light" (1Jn 1:7-**note**) does not mean walking flawlessly. It means that, when you stumble, the light of Christ causes you to see it and hate it and confess it and move forward with Christ.

And John is just as jealous to make sure we don't infer from these "tests of life" that we can be born again and then later lose our life and be lost. 1John 2:19-**note** is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that there is another way to understand what happens when a person abandons the church. It says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

Notice three things John says to protect us from misunderstanding. 1) Those who seemed to be born again and forsook the faith never were born again—they never were of us. "They went out from us, but they were not of us." In other words, the explanation is not that they lost their new birth. They never had it. 2) Those who are truly born again ("of us") will persevere to the end in faith. 1Jn 5:19b-**note**: "For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Endurance is not the cause of the new birth. The new birth is the cause of endurance, and endurance is the evidence of new birth. 3) God often makes plain who the false Christians are in the church by their eventual rejection of the truth and the people of God. Verse 19c: "But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." It became plain. And it often becomes plain today. ([Everyone Who Has Been Born of God Overcomes the World](#))

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**The best way to overcome the world!** Thomas Chalmers "Do not love the world or anything in the world." 1 John 2:15

There are two ways in which a person may attempt to displace the love of the world from the heart:

1. By a demonstration of the world's vanity, so that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it.

"When I surveyed all that I had accomplished and what I had toiled to achieve—everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun!" Ecclesiastes 2:11

"This world is passing away along with its desires!" 1 John 2:17

2. By setting forth another object, even Christ, as more worthy of its attachment, so that the heart shall be prevailed upon to exchange an old affection for a new one.

The best way to overcome the world, is not with morality or self-discipline. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing something more attractive than the world—the Lord Jesus Christ!

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Songs 5:16

- From Thomas Chalmers classic sermon on "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection"
- Here is a related quote from a sermon by **Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones** in which he is describing how believers are to put on the new and put off the old. He writes "**Indeed, as I have already said, you cannot truly deal with the negative unless you are at the same time doing the positive.** (AMEN TO THAT - NOTICE THE ORDER - Col 3:1-4+ MUST BE "PUT ON" BEFORE YOU CAN EFFECTIVELY KILL SIN in Col 3:5+. IN Gal 5:16+ YOU ARE TO FIRST WALK BY THE SPIRIT AND THEN AND ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE ENABLED TO NOT CARRY OUT THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH! OUR FALLEN FLESH TRIES TO INVERT THE ORDER AND THE RESULT IS INVARIABLY FAILURE TO KILL SIN! IN Ro 8:13+ IT IS BY THE SPIRIT YOU PUT TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY!) **The way to get rid of the defects is to cultivate the virtues.**To use a well-known phrase of Thomas Chalmers, what we need is to apply the "[The Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#)". I use a simple illustration. The way the dead leaves of winter are removed from some trees is not that people go around plucking them off; no, it is the new life, the shoot that comes and pushes off the dead in order to make room for itself. In the same way the Christian gets rid of all such things as bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking and all malice. The new qualities develop and the others simply have no room; they are pushed out and they are pushed off.

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**Arthur Pink - Overcoming the world - ([Faith as an Overcomer](#))** "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4

One of the fruits of the new birth, is a faith which not only enables its possessor to overcome the sensual and sinful customs, and



the carnal maxims and policies by which the profane world is regulated—but also the lying delusions and errors by which the professing world is fatally deceived.

Now, the only thing which will or can "overcome the world" is a God-given—but self-exercised faith.

**And faith does so, first, by receiving into the heart God's infallible testimony of the same.** He declares that "the world" is a corrupt, evanescent, hostile thing, which shall yet be destroyed by Him. His Holy Word teaches that the world is "evil" (Galatians 1:4-**note**), that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father—but is of the world" (1John 2:16-**note**), that "the whole world lies in wickedness" (1John 5:19-**note**) and shall yet be "burned up" (2Peter 3:10-**note**). As faith accepts God's verdict of it, the mind is spiritually enlightened; and its possessor views it as a worthless, dangerous, and detestable thing.

**Faith overcomes the world secondly, by obeying the Divine commands concerning it,** God has bidden us, "Do not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2-**note**), "Do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1John 2:15-**note**), and warns us that "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4-**note**). By heeding the Divine precepts, its spell over the heart is broken.

**Faith overcomes the world thirdly, by occupying the soul with more glorious, soul-delighting and satisfying objects.** We often hear and see 2Corinthians 4:16-17-**note** quoted—but rarely the explanatory words which follow. The daily renewing of the inner man and our afflictions working for us an eternal weight of glory are qualified by: "While we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Corinthians 4:18-**note**). The more the substance of the heavenly world engages the heart, the less hold will the shadows of this earthly world have upon it. Thus, faith wrought in the saints of old: "You accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions" (Hebrews 10:34-**note**). "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10-**note**).

**Fourth, by drawing out the heart unto Christ.** As it was by fleeing to Him for refuge, that the soul was first delivered from the power and thralldom of this world, so it is throughout the Christian life. The more we cultivate real communion with Christ, the less attraction will the baubles of this world have for us! The strength of temptation lies entirely in the bent of our affections, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21-**note**). While Christ is beheld as "the chief among ten thousand" (Song 5:10) as "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16-**note**), the things which charm the poor worldling—will repel us.

Moreover, as faith beholds in the mirror of the Word, the "glory of the Lord," the soul itself is "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Corinthians 3:18-**note**). The world gains the victory over the unregenerate by captivating their affections and capturing their wills; but the Christian overcomes the world, because his affections are set upon Christ and his will yielded to Him.

What is the extent of the Christian's victory? Through temporary weakness of faith, he may neglect the means of grace and fall into sin—yet his soul will be so wretched that he will return to Christ for cleansing and fresh supplies of grace.

"Though the conflict of grace with corrupt nature, and the attractions and terrors of the world, is often very sharp, and though regenerate men may be baffled, cast down, and appear slain in the battle; yet the Divine life within him, being invigorated by the Holy Spirit, will again excite him to arise and renew the conflict with redoubled fortitude and resolution; so that at length, the victory will be his decidedly" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). The life of faith is a "fight" (1Timothy 6:12-**note**), a warfare in which there are no furloughs or "vacations," and our success therein depends upon renouncing our own strength, and counting solely on the sufficiency of Christ's grace.

Here—then, we have a sure criterion by which we may determine our Christian progress or spiritual growth. If the things of this world have a decreasing power over me—then my faith is becoming stronger. If I am holding more lightly the things most prized by the ungodly—then I must be increasing in an experimental and soul-satisfying knowledge of Christ. If I am less cast down when some of the riches and comforts of this world are taken from me—then that is evidence they have less hold upon me. If I find the company of the most cultured and charming worldlings have a dampening effect upon my spirit, and I am happy when relieved of their presence—then my faith is overcoming the world.

**O may my heart be occupied,  
So wholly, Lord, with Thee,  
That with Your beauty satisfied,  
I elsewhere none may see.**

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**D L Moody** - He that "is born of God overcometh the world"; rising above the storms, and disturbing elements of flesh and nature, and all out of which Christ has risen, it seeks its own native element springing up into everlasting life, like the frigate bird which, when the storms agitate the surface of the ocean, when winds and waves rage in contempt of life on every side, rises aloft into the calm above the storms, and floats securely and tranquilly in that peaceful atmosphere, where it finds itself at home and at rest!

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## **Defeat or Victory?**

Read: 1 John 5:1–13

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

Each year on June 18 the great Battle of Waterloo is recalled in what is now Belgium. On that day in 1815, Napoleon's French army was defeated by a multinational force commanded by the Duke of Wellington. Since then, the phrase "to meet your Waterloo" has come to mean "to be defeated by someone who is too strong for you or by a problem that is too difficult for you."

When it comes to our spiritual lives, some people feel that ultimate failure is inevitable and it's only a matter of time until each of us will "meet our Waterloo." But John refuted that pessimistic view when he wrote to followers of Jesus: "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Enable us to overcome the world through faith and obedience to You.

John weaves this theme of spiritual victory throughout his first letter as he urges us not to love the things this world offers, which will soon fade away (2:15–17). Instead, we are to love and please God, "And this is what he promised us—eternal life" (v. 25).

While we may have ups and downs in life, and even some battles that feel like defeats, the ultimate victory is ours in Christ as we trust in His power.

Lord Jesus, Your ultimate victory in this fallen world is assured, and You ask us to share in it each day of our lives. By Your grace, enable us to overcome the world through faith and obedience to You.

When it comes to problems, the way out is to trust God on the way through. David C. McCasland

INSIGHT There is an interesting connection between being born of God, keeping His commands, and overcoming the world. If we are children of God, then we will keep His commandments, and this is how we overcome the world. This suggests that the world is against God's commands and that to be born of God is to be separate from the world. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **How to conquer the world! - Thomas Brooks, "[The Unsearchable Riches of Christ](#)")**

Perhaps the world—the smiling world or the frowning world, the tempting world or the persecuting world—lies as a heavy stone or burden upon your heart, as it does upon the hearts of thousands in these days; (witness their attempting anything to get the favors, honors and riches of this world! Ah! how many have turned their backs upon God, and Christ, and truth, etc., to gain the world!) How will you get this burden off? Only by exercise of faith.

**Many men hear sermons much—and yet remain worldly.** They may pray like angels—and yet live as if there were no heaven nor hell. They will talk much of heaven—and yet those who are spiritual and wise, smell their breath to stink strong of earth. All their endeavors can never cure them of this soul-killing disease—until faith breaks forth in its glorious actings. A man may hear sermons and pray many years—and yet remain as carnal, base, and worldly as ever! There is no way under heaven to remove this burden—but the exercise of faith!

"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 he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 John 5:4-5

Faith presents the world to the soul under all those notions which the Scripture holds forth the world unto us by. The Scripture holds forth the world as an impotent thing, as a mixed thing, as a mutable thing, as a momentary thing. Now faith comes and sets this home with power upon the soul—and this takes the soul off from the world.

Faith causes the soul to converse with those more glorious, soul-satisfying, soul-delighting, and soul-contenting objects. Now when faith is busied and exercised about soul-ennobling, soul-greatening, soul-raising, and soul-cheering objects—a Christian tramples the world under his feet! In Hebrews 11, it was the exercise of faith and hope upon noble and glorious objects—which carried them above the world—above the smiling world, and above the frowning world, above the tempting world, and above the persecuting world!

Faith conquers the world, by assuring the soul of enjoying of better things. Men may talk much of heaven, and of Christ, and religion, etc.; but give me a man who does really and clearly live under the power of divine faith—and I cannot see how such a one can be carried out in an inordinate love to these poor transitory things.

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**[Victim Or Victor - Our Daily Bread](#)** - The scar on my knee reminds me of a nasty fall from my first bicycle. While Mother bandaged my wound and Dad straightened my bike's twisted handlebars, they reassured me that I could be a victor over this mishap rather than a victim. They were right! I'm much older now, but during adversity I still need to remember that I can be an overcomer.

Jesus gave us grounds for good cheer and confidence by declaring, "I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). He accomplished this by His death and resurrection, and secured the victory for all generations. Preacher and author Watchman Nee (1903-1972) wrote, "Oh, that we might learn the undefeatedness of God!"

According to Jesus, it's possible to experience His "undefeatedness" in every adversity. Paul testified, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). And the apostle John wrote, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

How are you facing life's trials these days? As a defeated victim? Or as an overcoming victor? Hear Jesus lovingly say, "Be of good cheer!" (Jn. 16:33). He has overcome all these things, and so can you—through Him! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We need never be defeated  
By the trials that come our way;  
Since the Lord has overcome them,  
Victory is ours today. —Sper

We can go through anything because Jesus goes with us.

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### **[Living Victoriously - Our Daily Bread](#)**

Julie had been married only a year when she suffered a massive stroke that left her unable to walk or talk. Her parents offered to take the responsibility for her care so that her husband Mark could be free, but he refused. For 25 years now, he has continued to love and care for Julie.

Many people might feel sorry for Mark, saying that he has foolishly deprived himself of the only good that life can offer—present happiness. But Mark doesn't need their pity, because he has strong faith in Christ.

As Christians, we love God because He first loved us, and we have made obedience to God our highest delight. Our love relationship with Him makes this obedience a source of joy instead of an oppressive burden. Nonbelievers ask, "How can you be happy when you have to forfeit so much?" The answer is simple: We can look at life from the perspective of eternity because we have been "born of God." John wrote, "This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). God gives those who trust and obey Him the confidence that what He has for us is better than anything the world can give us. He makes us victors.

Because we know His love and walk by faith, we can live victoriously in all our circumstances. Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Although this life may bring us pain,  
Our faith in Christ can help us see  
That if we will obey His Word  
He'll give us joy and victory. —Sper

Surrender is victory when we surrender

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### **[Celebrate The Beginning - Our Daily Bread](#)**

Most celebrations of national independence mark the day of final victory in the struggle for freedom. Perhaps it's a mark of our American brashness that we celebrate the adoption of our Declaration of Independence, which occurred 7 years before the final treaty ending the Revolutionary War (September 3, 1783). The Declaration's adoption on July 4, 1776, burned the final bridges of

Britain's authority over America. It was a bold and risky start. We still celebrate the beginning.

Christians often ask each other, "When did you accept Christ as your Savior?" That bold beginning of faith, which may have seemed at the time like the greatest risk in the world, is worth noting and celebrating. With spiritual battles looming ahead, we still salute the birth.

The apostle John said that everyone "born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

"Born of God." Commencement, debut, unveiling. A step of faith. A new beginning. A break with the past. A humble confidence in the grace and power of a forgiving God. The start of true freedom.

That's a beginning worth celebrating! David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

#### THINKING IT OVER

Have you been born again? See John 3:1-18.

What did Jesus do to free you from sin's penalty?

Do you sense an increasing freedom from sin's power?

Our greatest freedom is freedom from sin.

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#### The Power To Obey

Read: 1 John 5:1-5

This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. —1 John 5:3

During the 1995 International Composers Festival in London, a computer was chosen to perform two piano pieces said to be too difficult for human hands. Seated on a piano stool and wearing a bow tie, the Sibelius 7 computer flawlessly played the formidable works of Hungarian composer Gyorgy Ligeti.

Many people feel that God's commands are like those unachievable piano pieces. Using mere human strength, they are. But with the life and power of God within us through faith in Christ, we see His commands in a whole new light.

The apostle John wrote, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3).

**The next verse gives the key: "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (v.4).**

We are not spiritual computers capable of a flawless performance. But the life of the perfect Son of God inside can enable us to obey His commands. God the Father has composed the "music" for our lives in His Word. Through His Son and His Spirit, He has given us the power to play it with confidence and joy.

Although we cannot "play the tune"

God gave to Moses long ago,

Our Lord performed it perfectly,

And now through us His power can flow. —Hess

Assignments from God always include His enablement.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Victory over the World!**  
**George Everard, 1866**

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life!" Revelation 2:10

The promises in Scripture are made to conquerors. Grace in the heart conquers a believer's foes — and then grace places on his head the crown of life. In the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, the same note is repeated again and again. Each promise, that of a crown of life, of eating the hidden manna, of being a pillar in the temple of God, of sitting with Christ on His throne — is made "to him who overcomes."

Among other enemies, we must overcome the world. Victory over it is God's seal upon the heaven-born soul.

"Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." (1 John 5:4)

A question here needs to be considered: What is to be understood by "overcoming the world"?

### **1. To overcome the world, is to not direct our course by that of the multitude around us.**

Ever since the fall, mankind have been going astray. The stream has been running in a wrong direction. Men have chosen the bitter instead of the sweet — and the evil instead of the good.

There is a highway, broad and flowery, and along it the multitudes are ever traveling. There is a narrow and holy path, leading through the world to an eternal glorious home — yet few can be persuaded to choose it.

There is a ship gaily decorated, flags flying, and the name written on its bow, "The glory of the world!" Within it embark crowds of passengers. There is another ship, less ostentatious but far safer, bound on a voyage to Heaven, her name "Emmanuel!" Yet within her, few are willing to sail.

When has there been a time in the history of the Church, when its living members have been more than a little flock?

In the days of Noah but eight souls were saved in the ark, and among them were some at least not born of God. In the days of Elijah, out of the ten thousands of Israel — but seven thousand men were there, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the days of the prophet Isaiah, there was but "a very small remnant."

When the Son of man was upon earth, He reminded His disciples that those who would follow Him must be content to have but few companions: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction — and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life — and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

Is it otherwise even now? Where is there a city, a town, a village, of which more than a small part are true Christians? Where the truth has been most clearly proclaimed, and the greatest efforts made for the good of souls — yet the disciples of the Crucified One are far more than outnumbered by the children of this world.

If this is so, shrink not from boldly confessing Christ because you stand almost alone. Be it your fixed purpose, that if those around you will not join you on your way Zionward — you will not stay with them in the City of Destruction. The company you shall meet with at the close, will more than recompense the loneliness of the road. Solitary at times you may be now, but there awaits you at the end of your course, a joyful welcome from the whole family of the redeemed.

### **2. To overcome the world, is to rise above the allurements which it has to offer.**

A good lesson may be gathered from a fable of olden time. It is said that a king had a daughter who was very swift of foot. So confident was he of her speed in the race, that he engaged, if any could outrun her, he would take the kingdom of which she was the rightful heiress. The attempt was made by many, but in vain. At length came forward one who, by deceit, endeavored to succeed. In his hand he carried three golden balls, and when she was gaining ground upon him, he purposely let fall one of them near her. Staying for a moment to pick up the treasure, she lost the position she had gained. Thrice, at intervals, did he repeat the artifice, and with the same result. She had imagined that without difficulty she could regain lost ground, but it was beyond her power. Her adversary won the race, and took her crown.

Well may these golden balls represent to us, but the honors, the gains, the vanities, and pleasures by which many are drawn aside, and, through the craft of their wily foe, lose their kingdom and their crown!

A word of counsel may here be given with reference to the pursuit of lawful objects. It is both natural and right that men should endeavor to succeed in whatever they undertake. To rise in life, to lay up for ourselves or our families, is not unlawful; in fact, life would lose half its interest were not such aims permitted to us — but the chief point is ever to keep them in their right place. Let them be secondary, and not the main object of our ambition. We have need to follow such directions as Christ laid down for our guidance in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21. That is, let the securing of earthly treasures be subservient to the obtaining of treasures in Heaven. Let your heart be on the latter and not on the former.

Again. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Parallel to this again is the lesson taught in the parable of the unjust steward. No commendation is given to his injustice, but to his wisdom. "The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely." He used the present, that he might secure the future. Thus we find the teaching summed up: "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings!" Luke 16:9. That is, so employ your wealth, which too often by others has been gained or spent in the service of sin — that when your stewardship is over, you may be rich toward God; and He, your everlasting Friend, shall welcome you to His kingdom. (Luke 16.8, 9.)

To assist in estimating the true value of these things, so much coveted by man, lay to heart the instability which is stamped upon worldly riches.

After a stormy night, there lay beneath a high tree a branch which had been broken off by the force of the wind. Upon it was a rook's nest, and within the nest were the little ones cold and dead. It was found that the nest had been built upon a rotten bough, which consequently could not resist the violence of the wind.

Just so, all supreme affection for earthly things, all reliance upon them — is building the nest upon a rotten bough. By and by some fierce blast will rend it, and the hope fixed there will perish in a moment. One Branch alone is there upon which we may securely build — the Branch of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, who abides evermore.

A word here is also needful with reference to doubtful amusements.

To speak of them is to tread upon delicate ground, but the Word of God gives the clue by which we are to be guided. It lays down certain principles which an enlightened conscience, and a heart touched with love to Christ, will not misinterpret. In many of these amusements there is nothing upon which we can lay our finger, and say, "This is forbidden" — but our great enemy knows full well that it is not in things positively unlawful, but in such as are doubtful, that he can gain most advantage.

Judge whether the atmosphere of the theater, the race-course, the ballroom, and such-like scenes are not very harmful to the life of God in the soul. When near the Tropics you must be influenced by the heat — and when near the Poles you must be sensible of the chilling cold.

Take another illustration. The ears of corn near the beaten path, are very likely to be trodden down, or plucked by those who pass by — while the wheat at a distance from it is safe. With our evil hearts it is well not to go to the brink of temptation, but to keep as far away as possible. "He who loves danger, shall perish in danger."

Judge of your duty in this matter, not by the opinion of those around you, but by a calm prayerful consideration of the mind of the Spirit in such passages as the following,

"The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:14-16)

"Do not be conformed to this world." (Romans 12:2)

"Do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world." (1 John 2:15)

"Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

Study also Luke 8.14; 9.23; Philippians 3.13, 14, 20, 21; Colossians 3.1,2; 1 Timothy 5.6; Titus 2.12-14; James 4.4; 1 Peter 4.7; 2 Peter 3.11, 12.

There is a way of turning aside the point of the plainest Scripture commands, by giving to them another meaning — but to most of those who desire in all things to follow Christ, the passages above quoted will afford no doubtful guidance.

Doubt not that our Father delights in the happiness of His children, and that He will not deny whatever really conduces to it.

Christ sat down at the marriage feast, and His mother and His disciples were with Him. This fact may give one plain rule: Wherever we can ask the Master to accompany us — there we are safe. Wherever His presence is shut out, is not, except in rare cases, the



place for one of His people.

Both with respect to our aiming at earth's treasures, and partaking of the pleasures which it offers, we have an excellent example in the spirit of Moses. His choice was a wise one. Before him the prospect was as attractive as could well be imagined. Within his grasp was the best that Egypt could offer. Wealth, rank, and all they could purchase, were his own. Yet he refused them. He trampled them beneath his feet.

Under other circumstances, much he might have retained and consecrated to the service of God — but when it came into competition with a better portion, he cheerfully forsook all. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:24-27

### **3. If we would overcome the world, we must not be wholly engrossed by the daily routine of duty.**

That we ought most diligently to attend to the claims of a lawful calling, none can doubt; but it is the spirit in which we do so, that marks whether the world is our servant or our master.

The laborer with his hand on the plough may cherish within, bright thoughts of the Paradise above. The merchant, through the day mingling in the busy throng, may yet find a vacant place within for the hallowed presence of Christ. The mother, with the cares and worries that belong to a family, may turn in her heart again and again to the Great Burden-bearer, and be lightened of her heavy load.

Take two men engaged in the same pursuit, fairly matched in the work to be done, and the concerns belonging to it, and not seldom will you find the greatest possible difference between them. Look within: read the heart of each, and what it says.

The inner thought of one is, "Business, money labor, duty — you are my God! For you I live, I toil, I strive day by day."

The heart of the other speaks far otherwise, "Oh, my Savior, keep me near You by Your grace! In life's conflict be ever at my right hand! In all my labors may I glorify You! If riches increase, teach me rightly to use them! May I so pass through things temporal, that finally I lose not the things eternal!"

### **4. To overcome the world, we must patiently and meekly bear the cross that may be laid upon us.**

No Christian is without a cross — and it is often a heavy one.

In days gone by, His followers have found it no easy matter to endure the shame and persecution that have come upon them for His sake. Driven into exile or burned at the stake, exposed to wild beasts or cast into the sea — have His faithful martyrs suffered the loss of all things, even life itself, rather than deny Him they loved. Nor is this trial passed. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Especially at the outset of a Christian life, is this cross felt. Old associates turn away, unkind remarks are made, petty annoyances are placed in the path. In many positions it is a life-long struggle to make a good confession before the ungodly.

It may be the cross of . . .

a lengthened affliction,  
the painful weariness of a sick chamber,  
or the desolation of a bereaved heart.

In a village not far from Cambridge a Christian woman lay under the chastening rod of God. A strange complication of disease daily wore out her strength. A fever had first laid her low, a spinal disease followed; she then lost her sight, and her heart became affected; to this was added cancer in the throat; and yet beneath it all she murmured not. In her lowly cottage with barely the necessities of life, for more than twenty long years Sarah Carter cheerfully bore her cross. The new song of praise to the Lamb was ever upon her lips — never was she weary of extolling, in the hearing of saints and of sinners, the Name of her adorable Redeemer.

This was to overcome the world.

### **5. To overcome the world, we must not be guided by the maxims which the world follows.**

Profession of religion abounds — few but wish, in some sense, to be reckoned good Christians. Yet what is the rule of life by which men are guided? With the utmost stretch of charity, can we believe that they are led by the precepts of Christ? Is it not painfully evident, that the principles which actuate them are not those of Holy Scripture? Are not such maxims as the following, the mainspring of daily conduct, even in a large proportion of those who are found each Sunday within the walls of a Christian sanctuary?

"A little religion is all very well."

"The world for health — serious things for days of sickness."

"Business first — Christ afterwards."

"It is impossible to be honest in trade."

"If I am not worse than others — why should I fear?"

"Obey God when it is convenient — when it is not, please yourself."

I do not mean that men always utter such words with their lips, but are they not the rule by which they live?

Yet go to the faithful Word. What are the maxims which are there laid down? Are they not as far removed from these, as the east is from the west? Find a man who has been born of the Spirit, and is daily taught out of the Sacred Oracles — and what are the principles which he now strives to follow?

"Religion is everything — or nothing."

"There is no little sin."

"I must obey God — though I die for it."

"A little with Christ, is better than all the world without Him."

To follow out such principles in daily practice, is victory over the world. In your own home, in your place of business, in society, in the street, and in the market-place — to carry them out to their legitimate conclusions, is to prove yourself a Christian in more than the name.

As the converted Hindu would regard the idol which once he worshiped, but now has broken in pieces, or cast down beneath his feet — so look upon this present world. Yes, as more than once a man has brought the idol of stone, and made it one of the steps into the house of the living God — so use that which once may have been your idol, that by it you may advance the kingdom, and honor the Name of the Most High. Employ your wealth, and standing, and influence, for His glory and the good of His Church.

Is it easy so to act through life? Far from it. It requires effort, and watchfulness, and prayer. Those who imagine there to be no difficulty, have never yet made the attempt.

Is it possible so to act? Surely it is. In a great measure may each Christian be victorious in this conflict. God puts a weapon into our hands, so mighty that we need never despair, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith! Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5.4,5.)

Why is this? Why does faith, instead of any other grace, bear away the palm of victory.?

## **6. To overcome the world, we must engage the power of Christ by faith.**

Man is weak and strengthless to meet a single temptation. "Without me," Christ declares, "you can do nothing." But the strong Redeemer is pledged to put forth His mighty power to support those who rely upon Him. Faith does this. It has been beautifully defined to be "the Holy Spirit moving the soul to lean on Jesus!" Hence comes it that the believer can rise above all the opposing influences around.

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them (That is, false teachers), because greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world."

### **Faith triumphs, because it brings love.**

"Faith works by love." Nothing is stronger than the power of love. For seven long years, twice over, did Jacob toil and labor, night and day, and yet they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he bare to Rachel. Not a little did Jonathan bear of his father's displeasure, because, out of love to David, he took his part and pleaded his cause. What toil and hardship will a mother endure, out of love to her child — what comforts, pleasures, even necessities, will she forego, that she may attend upon a sick babe. All night long have I seen a mother, on board a steamer, watch by her little one; weary and tired herself — yet she would not leave its side, but remained there, that she might anticipate its every need.

The love of Christ, shed abroad within the heart by the Spirit, is in the same way, a powerful instrument to enable us either for toil, or the endurance of hardship, or of reproach in the world. Few ever labored so unceasingly, or more patiently endured all trials and

crosses that were appointed to him, than the Apostle of the Gentiles, and his one motive was love: "The love of Christ constrains us," was the secret of his marvelous life.

And love is ever the child of true faith. Everyone that believes in Christ, must love Him. "Unto you who believe, He is precious." The more also faith increases, the more also will love.

### **Faith triumphs, because it brings with it a present joy.**

Faith brings joy. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Who can believe in a free and perfect forgiveness, in a Father's wise and tender care, in His exceeding readiness to hear our prayers — but it must in some measure bring a ray of gladness into the soul?

Joy brings strength. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." This joy outshines earthly pleasures, and counterbalances all earthly sorrows. "Sorrowful — yet always rejoicing" may sound as a paradox; but to those strong in faith, it has often been a reality.

Here is a lesson worth pondering. The joy of faith triumphs over the world.

He who has just tasted of the grapes of Eschol — will have no desire for the apples of Sodom. He who has slaked his thirst from the waters of the River of Life — will not stoop to drink of the earth's polluted streams.

"Why do you now abstain from what once was your delight?" was asked of a man. "I have found something better — I have found Jesus," was the reply.

The more we can find satisfaction and rest in Christ, as the chief Portion of our souls — the more completely shall we be able to cast off the spirit of the world, that as yet may cleave to us. There are trees which retain many of their old leaves — until new ones are put forth. There are feelings and habits which can never be displaced, until better feelings and habits arise.

The comfort of the Spirit, the love of Christ, the peace which passes understanding — these form the surest antidote to the enticements, and the best support against the tribulations, of an evil world.

### **Faith also triumphs, because it is the telescope by which invisible things are brought to sight, and distant things are brought near!**

Why is it that men are so thoroughly wrapped up in the worldly things that surround them? Is it not because to them a future state has no real existence? They rise in the morning and rest at night, they rejoice in prosperity and grieve under trial they pass day after day, month after month, year after year — without the least realization that, compared to that which shall yet be manifested, the things of the day are but as a passing shadow.

But take the telescope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for — the evidence of things not seen." Believe in the promises of Christ, with reference to a world yet to come. Behold, in sure expectation, the land that is far off, the mansions in the Father's house, the glory of the everlasting city.

The present scene then will lose much of its power. A new spring of action will be felt.

Take an illustration from the life of Christopher Columbus. A firm persuasion took possession of his mind, that beyond the wide Atlantic might be discovered a rich and beautiful land. To many, the grounds for this confidence seemed very slight, but to him they were sufficient. No doubt existed in his breast; and in this faith, he rose above obstacles, which were well near insuperable.

For more than twenty years he endured all manner of hardships, rather than forego the purpose he had formed, of going forth as a discoverer. From court to court, from country to country, from town to town, he journeyed, mostly on foot, to secure friends for his great enterprise.

At length, with a ship little fitted for such a voyage, he set forth with a few companions. For weeks and months he persevered, in spite of his own fears, in spite of the reproaches of his crew who now regarded him as leading them on to certain destruction. He remained steadfast, and faith conquered. The distant shore was gained. Ever since, Columbus has been honored as one of the great heroes of mankind.

Let us take home the lesson. Let us follow in his footsteps. There is a country far better than that discovered by Columbus. It is a land where the ills of this life cannot come. It is revealed to us on no doubtful authority. We believe in its existence, not because of any chance reports, or guesses and surmisings of our own — but on the testimony of Him who cannot lie.

In our path, however, lie many and great perils. There rolls many a wave between us and the desired haven. But why shall we fear?

When the shore is won at last,

Who will count the billows past!

Let us exercise faith.

Let us pray for its increase.

Let us hope to the end.

Let us lean on the promise.

Then danger shall not dismay, nor fears overwhelm us.

The rest shall be gained, and to God shall be all the glory. The first act of Columbus was to take possession of the land, in the name of the Lord — so also shall we. To His merciful guidance and mighty protection shall we ascribe all the praise.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your Name give glory, for Your mercy and Your truth's sake."

## **Victory!** **by J. C. Ryle**

"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"  
(1 John 5:4-5)

It ought to be our practice, if we have any religion, to examine the state of our souls from time to time, and to find out whether we are "right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21).

Are we true Christians? Are we likely to go to heaven when we die? Are we born again—born of the Spirit—born of God? These are searching questions, which imperatively demand an answer; and the text which heads this paper will help us to give that answer. If we are born of God, we shall have one great mark of character, we shall "overcome the world."

In opening up this subject, there are three points to which I propose to invite attention in this paper.

**I. In the first place, let us consider the name by which John describes a true Christian. He calls him six times over, in his First Epistle, a man "born of God," and once, "begotten of God."**

**II. In the second place, let us consider the special mark which John supplies of a man born of God. He says that he "overcomes the world."**

**III. In the last place, let us consider the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world. He says, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."**

Let me clear the way by expressing an earnest hope that no reader will turn away from the subject before us, under the idea that it is a controversial one. I doubt whether any doctrine of the Bible has suffered so much from impatient dislike of controversy as that which is contained in the phrase, "Born of God." Yet that phrase contains a great foundation verity of Christianity, which can never be neglected without damage. Deep down, below strifes and contentions about the effect of baptism, and the meaning of liturgical services, there lies in those three words one of the primary rocks of the everlasting gospel—even the inward work of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man.

The atoning work of Christ FOR us, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit WITHIN US, are the two cornerstones of saving religion. Surely a truth which the last writer of the New Testament brings forward no less than seven times in the five chapters of one Epistle—a truth which he binds up seven times with some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian man—such a truth ought not to be disliked or timidly passed by. Surely it may be handled profitably without entering upon debatable ground. I shall attempt so to handle it in this paper.

**I. First and foremost, I ask my readers to notice the NAME by which John describes a true Christian. Here, and in five other places, he speaks of him as one "born of God."**

Let us briefly analyze this rich and wonderful expression. The natural birth of any child of man, in the humblest rank of life, is an important event. It is the bringing into being of a creature who will outlive sun, moon, stars,

and earth, and may one day develop a character which shall shake the world. How much more important must spiritual birth be! How much must lie beneath that figurative phrase, "Born of God!"

(a) To be "born of God" is to be the SUBJECT OF AN INWARD CHANGE of heart, so complete, that it is like passing into a new existence. It is the introduction into the human soul of a seed from heaven, a new principle, a Divine nature, a new will. Certainly it is no outward bodily alteration; but it is no less certain that it is an entire alteration of the inward man. It adds no new faculties to our minds; but it gives an entirely new bent and bias to our old ones. The tastes and opinions of one "born of God," his views of sin, of the world, of the Bible, of God, and of Christ, are so thoroughly new, that he is to all intents and purposes what Paul calls "a new creature." In fact, as the Church Catechism truly says, it is "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."

(b) To be "born of God" is a change which is THE PECULIAR GIFT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to all His believing people. It is He who plants in their hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, 'Abba Father', and makes them members of His mystical body, and sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Rom. 8:15). It is written—"He quickens whom He will." "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:21-26). In short, as the first chapter of John teaches, so it will be as long as the world stands—"To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

(c) To be "born of God" is a change which unquestionably is VERY MYSTERIOUS. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us that in well-known words—"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8). But we must all confess there are a thousand things in the natural world around us which we cannot explain, and yet believe. We cannot explain how our wills act daily on our members, and make them move, or rest, at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. The wisest philosopher cannot tell us the origin of physical life. What right, then, have we to complain because we cannot comprehend the beginning of spiritual life in him that is "born of God"?

(d) But to be "born of God" is a change which WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AND FELT. I do not say that he who is the subject of it will invariably understand his own feelings. On the contrary, those feelings are often a cause of much anxiety, conflict, and inward strife. Nor do I say that a person "born of God" will always become at once an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing weak and defective can be observed by others. But this I do say, the Holy Spirit never works in a person's soul without producing some perceptible results in character and conduct. The true grace of God is like light and fire—it cannot be hidden; it is never idle; it never sleeps. I can find no such thing as totally "dormant" grace in Scripture. It is written, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him—and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

(e) To crown all, to be born of God is a thing which is of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to our salvation. Without it we can neither know God rightly and serve Him acceptably in the life that now is, nor dwell with God comfortably in the life that is to come. There are two things which are indispensably needful before any child of Adam can be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ—the other is the renewal of his heart by the Spirit of Christ. Without the forgiveness we have no title to heaven—without the renewed heart we could not enjoy heaven. These two things are never separate. Every forgiven man is also a renewed man, and every renewed man is also a forgiven man. There are two standing maxims of the gospel which should never be forgotten—one is, "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life;" the other is, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (John 3:36; Rom. 8:9). Quaint, but most true, is the old saying—"Born once—die twice—and die forever. Born twice—never die—and live forever." Without a natural birth we would never have lived and moved on earth—without a spiritual birth we shall never live and dwell in heaven. It is written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

And now, before I pass away from the name which John gives in this text to the true Christian, let us not forget to ask ourselves what we know experimentally about being "born of God." Let us search and try our hearts with honest self-examination, and seek to find out whether there is any real work of the Holy Spirit in our inward man. Far be it from me to encourage the slightest approach to hypocrisy, self-conceit, and fanaticism. Nor do I want any one to look for that angelic perfection in himself on earth, which will only be found in heaven. All I say is, let us never be content with the "outward and visible signs" of Christianity, unless we also know something of 'inward and spiritual grace.' All I ask, and I think I have a right to ask, is, that we should

often take this First Epistle of John in our hands, and try to find out by its light whether we are "born of God."

One more thing let me add, which I dare not leave unsaid. Let us never be ashamed, in a day of abounding heresy, to contend earnestly for the Godhead and personality of the Holy Spirit, and the reality of His work on souls. Just as we clasp to our hearts the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as great foundation verities of the gospel, so let us grasp tightly the truth about God the Holy Spirit. Let us ever give Him in our religion the place and dignity which Scripture assigns to Him. Wherever in the providence of God we may be called to worship, let our first inquiry be, "Where is the Lamb?" and our second, "Where is the Holy Spirit?" We know there have been many martyrs for Jesus Christ and the true doctrine of justification. "A day may come," said a remarkable Christian, "when there will need to be martyrs for the Holy Spirit, and His work within the soul."

**II. The second thing I will now ask my readers to notice in my text is, the special MARK which John supplies of the man who is a true Christian. He says, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." In short, to use the words of that holy man Bishop Wilson—the Apostle teaches that "the only certain proof of regeneration is victory."**

We are all apt to flatter ourselves, that if we are duly enrolled members of that great ecclesiastical corporation, the Church of England, our souls cannot be in much danger. We secretly stifle the voice of conscience with the comfortable thought, "I am a Churchman—why should I be afraid?"

Yet common sense and a little reflection might remind us that there are no privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Before we repose in self-satisfied confidence on our Church membership, we shall do well to ask ourselves whether we bear in our characters the marks of living membership of Christ's mystical body. Do we know anything of renouncing the devil and all his works, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? And, to bring this matter to a point, as it is set before us in our text, do we know anything of "overcoming the world"?

The three great spiritual enemies of man are the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say, that at no former period has "the world" been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ's Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that "worldliness" is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era. That same love of the world's good things and good opinion—that same dread of the world's opposition and blame—which proved so fatal to Judas Iscariot, and Demas, and many more in the beginning of the gospel era—each is just as powerful in the nineteenth century as it was in the first, and a hundred times more.

Even in days of persecution, under heathen emperors, these spiritual enemies slew their thousands, and in days of ease, and luxury, and free thought, like our own, they slay their tens of thousands. The subtle influence of the world, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe. It creeps into families like an angel of light, and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves. The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of self-indulgence, and the immense growth of a passionate relish for recreations and amusements of all kinds; the startling rise and progress of a so-called liberality of opinion, which refuses to say anybody is wrong, whatever he does, and loudly asserts that, as in the days of the Judges, every one should think and do what is right in his own eyes, and never be checked, all these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ's ministers to cry aloud, "Beware of the world!"

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the word of the living God changes not—"Do not love the world!" "Do not be conformed to this world!" "Friendship with the world is enmity with God!"—these mighty sayings of God's statute-book remain still unrepealed (1 John 2:15; Rom. 12:2; James 4:4). The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man "born of God" will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world.

Such a man does not "overcome" by retiring into a corner, and becoming a monk or a hermit, but by boldly meeting his foes and conquering them. He does not refuse to fill his place in society, and do his duty in that position to which God has called him. But though "in" the world, he is not "of" the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He knows when to say No, when to refuse compliance, when to halt, when to say, "Thus far have I gone, but I go no further." He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life, as if they were the sum total of existence. Even in innocent things he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations, and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money-getting,



or politics, or scientific pursuits, and as if there were no life to come.

Everywhere, and in every condition, in public and in private, in business or in amusements, he carries himself like a "citizen of a better country," and as one who is not entirely dependent on temporal things. Like the noble Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, he is alike unmoved by the elephant or by the gold. You will neither bribe him, nor frighten him, nor allure him into neglecting his soul. This is one way in which the true Christian proves the reality of his Christianity. This is the way in which the man "born of God" overcomes the world.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, the things I have just said may appear "hard sayings." The standard of true Christianity which I have just raised may seem extravagant, and extreme, and unattainable in this life. I grant most freely that to "overcome" in the fashion I have described needs a constant fight and struggle—and that all such fighting is naturally unpleasant to flesh and blood. It is disagreeable to find ourselves standing alone—and running counter to the opinions of all around us. We do not like to appear narrow-minded, and exclusive, and uncharitable, and uncongenial, and ill-natured, and out of harmony with our fellows. We naturally love ease and popularity, and hate collisions in religion, and if we hear we cannot be true Christians without all this fighting and warring, we are tempted to say to ourselves, "I will give it up in despair." I speak from bitter experience. I have known and felt all this myself.

To all who are tempted in this way—and none, I believe, are so much tempted as the young—to all who are disposed to shrink back from any effort to overcome the world, as a thing impossible—to all such I offer a few words of friendly exhortation. Before you turn your back on the enemy, and openly confess that he is too strong for you—before you bow down to the strong man, and let him place his foot on your neck, let me put you in remembrance of some things which, perhaps, you are forgetting.

Is it not true that myriads of men and women, no stronger than yourself, have fought this battle with the world, and won it? Think of the mighty armies of Christian soldiers who have walked in the narrow way in the last eighteen centuries, and proved more than conquerors. The same Divine Captain, the same armor, the same helps and aids by which they overcame, are ready for you. Surely if they got the victory, you may hope to do the same.

Again, is it not true that this fight with the world is a thing of absolute necessity? Does not our Master say, "Whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"? (Luke 14:27). "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword" (Mat. 10:34). Here, at any rate, we cannot remain neutral, and sit still. Such a line of conduct may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the masterly inactivity which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone—all this will never do in the Christian warfare.

To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leads to destruction. We have no choice or option. The promises to the Seven Churches in Revelation are only "to him that overcomes." We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. We must put on the whole armor of God. "He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Eph. 6:11; Luke 22:36).

Surely, in the face of such considerations as these, I may well charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world, and not resist it, to awake to a sense of their danger. Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence or love of popularity are gradually weaving round you. Awake before it is too late—before repeated worldly acts have formed habits, and habits have crystallized into character, and you have become a helpless slave.

When men on every side are volunteering for war, and ready to go forth to battle for a corruptible crown, stand up and resolve to do it for one that is incorruptible. The world is not so strong an enemy as you think, if you will only meet it boldly, and use the right weapons. The imagined difficulties will vanish, or melt away like snow, as you approach them. The lions you now dread will prove chained. Hundreds could tell you that they served the world for years, and found at last that its rewards were hollow and unreal, and its so-called good things could neither satisfy nor save.

But who, on the other hand, ever fought God's battle manfully against the world and failed to find a rich reward? No doubt the experience of Christian pilgrims is very various, Not all have "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom, and some are "saved so as by fire" (2Pe. 1:11; 1Co. 3:15). But none, I am persuaded, have such joy and peace in believing, and travel to the celestial city with such light hearts, as those who come out boldly, and overcome the love and fear of the world. Such men the King of kings delights to honor while they live; and when they die, their testimony is that of old Bunyan's hero, Valiant—"I am going to my Father's house; and though with great difficulty I have got here, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have

been at to arrive where I am."

**III. The third and last thing which I shall ask you to notice in this text is, the secret of the true Christian's VICTORY over the world. John reveals that secret to us twice over, as if he would emphasize his meaning, and make it unmistakable—"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our FAITH. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who BELIEVES that Jesus is the Son of God?"**

Simplicity is a distinguishing characteristic of many of God's handiworks. "How beautifully simple!" has often been the philosopher's cry, on finding out some great secret of nature. Simplicity is the striking feature of the principle by which the man "born of God" overcomes the world. Perhaps he hardly understands it himself. But he is what he is, and does what he does, acts as he acts, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason, he BELIEVES. He realizes the existence of 'unseen objects'—compared to which the frowns or smiles, the favor or blame of the world, are trifles as light as air. God, and heaven, and judgment, and eternity, are not "words and names" with him—but vast and substantial realities; and faith makes everything else look shadowy and unreal.

But, towering far above all other objects, he sees by faith an unseen Savior, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debt to God with His own precious blood, went to the grave for him, rose again, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate with the Father. SEEING HIM, he feels constrained to love Him first and foremost, to set his chief affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and to live not for himself, but for Him who died for him. SEEING HIM, he fears not to face the world's displeasure, and fights on with a firm confidence that he will be "more than conqueror." In short, it is "the expulsive power of a new principle"—a living faith in an unseen God and an unseen Jesus—which minimizes the difficulties of a true Christian, drives away the fear of man, and overcomes the world.

This is the principle that made the Apostles what they were after the day of Pentecost. When Peter and John stood before the Council, and spoke in such fashion that all men marveled at their boldness, their vivid faith saw One higher than Annas and Caiaphas and their companions, who would never forsake them. When Saul, converted and renewed, gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own nation, to become a preacher of the gospel he had once despised, he saw far away, by faith, One that was invisible, who could give him a hundredfold more in this present life, and in the world to come everlasting life! These all overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle which made the primitive Christians hold fast their religion even to death, unshaken by the fiercest persecution of heathen emperors. They were often unlearned and ignorant men, and saw many things through a glass darkly. But their so-called "obstinacy" astonished even philosophers like Pliny.

For centuries there were never lacking men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die, rather than to deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword failed to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, with her legions, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine. They overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle that made our own Reformers in the sixteenth century endure hardships even unto death, rather than withdraw their protest against the Church of Rome. Many of them, no doubt, like Rogers, and Philpot, and Bradford, might have enjoyed rich preferments and died quietly in their beds, if they would only have recanted. But they chose rather to suffer affliction, and strong in faith, died at the stake. This was the principle that made the rank and file of our English martyrs in the same age—laborers, artisans, and apprentices—yield their bodies to be burned. Poor and uneducated as they were, they were rich in faith; and if they could not speak for Christ, they could die for Him. These all overcame by BELIEVING.

But time would fail me if I brought forward all the evidence that might be adduced on this subject. Let us look at our own age. Let us consider the men who have made the greatest mark on the world for Christ's cause in the last hundred years. Let us remember how clergymen like Whitefield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion, in the face of opposition, slander, ridicule, and real persecution from nine-tenths of the professing Christians in our land. Let us remember how men like William Wilberforce, and Havelock, and Henry Lawrence, and Hedley Vicars, and George Moore, the Christian merchant, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed Christ's banner even in the House of Commons, in the camp, at the regimental mess table, or in the counting-house in the city. Let us remember how these noble servants of God were neither frightened nor laughed out of their religion, and won the respect even of their adversaries. These all had one principle. "Give me," said that strange dictator who rode rough-shod over England's Church and Crown in the seventeenth century, "Give me men that have a principle." These Christian soldiers of our own day had a principle, and that ruling principle

was faith in an unseen God and Savior. By this faith they lived, and walked, and fought the good fight, and overcame.

Does any one who reads this paper desire to live the life of a true Christian, and overcome the world? Let him begin by seeking to have the principle of victory within. Without this, all outward show of spirituality is utterly worthless. There is many a worldly heart under a monk's cowl. Faith, inward faith, is the one thing needful. Let him begin by praying for FAITH. It is the gift of God, and a gift which those who ask shall never ask in vain. The fountain of faith is not yet dry. The mine is not exhausted. He who is called the "Author of faith" is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and waits to be entreated (Heb. 12:2). Without faith you will never war a good warfare, never set down your foot firmly, never make progress on the ice of this slippery world. You must believe if you would do. If men do nothing in religion, and sit still like uninterested spectators of a show, it is simply because they do not believe. Faith is the first step towards heaven.

Would any one who reads this paper fight the Christian battle with constantly increasing success and prosperity? Then let him pray daily for a continual growth of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let him never forget the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith." Let him watch jealously over his faith, and never let its fire burn low. According to the degree of his faith will be the measure of his peace, his strength, and his victory over the world.

(a) And now let us leave the whole subject with the solemn self-inquiry—"What do we know of that great test of religion which this text supplies? What do we know of overcoming the world? Where are we? What are we doing? Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Are we overcoming or being overcome?" Alas, it is a sorrowful fact, that many know not whether they are Christ's freemen—or the world's slaves! The "fetters of the world" are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and knows not that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen. Wise is that petition in our matchless Litany—"From all the deceits of the world, good Lord, deliver us."

I press this inquiry in all affection on my younger readers. You are just at that generous and unsuspecting age when the world seems least dangerous and most inviting, and it stands to reason you are most likely to be ensnared and overcome. Experience alone can make you see the enemy in his true colors. When you have as many grey hairs on your heads as I have, you will place a very different estimate on the praise or the hatred of this world. But, even now, remember my caution—"If you love your souls, hold the world at arm's length. Beware of the world."

(b) Reader, you and I meet over this paper for once in our lives, and are parting in all probability to meet no more. You are perhaps launching forth on the waves of this troublesome world. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may have a prosperous voyage, and be found at length in the safe haven of eternal life.

But, oh, take heed that you are well equipped for the stormy waters you have to cross, and see that you have a compass to steer by, that you can depend on, and a pilot who will not fail! Beware of making shipwreck by conformity to the world. Alas, how many put to sea in gallant trim, with colors flying, and brilliant prospects, and are lost at last with all on board! They seem at first to begin with Moses, and Daniel, and the saints in Nero's household; but they end at last with Balaam, and Demas, and Lot's wife! Oh, remember the pilot and the compass! No compass like the Bible. No pilot like Christ!

Take the advice I give you, as a friend, this day. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and dwell in your heart by faith, and to "deliver you from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Ask Him to pour out His promised Spirit on you, and to make you willing to bear His easy yoke without further delay, and to resist the world. Strive, in the strength of Christ, to get the victory over the world, whatever it may cost you. Be ashamed of being a slave, however gilded the chains may be. Be ashamed of the mark of the collar. Resolve to play the man and be free. Liberty is the greatest of blessings, and deserves the greatest struggles. Well said the Jewish rabbis in ancient days, "If the sea were ink, and the earth parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty." For freedom's sake, Greeks, and Romans, and Germans, and Poles, and Swiss, and Scotchmen, and Englishmen, have often cheerfully fought to the bitter end, and laid down their lives. Surely, if men have made such sacrifices for the freedom of their bodies, it is a disgrace to professing Christians if they will not fight for the liberty of their souls. This day, I repeat, resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will fight the good fight against the world; and not only fight, but overcome. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

(c) Finally, let us all remember that the Christian soldier's best time is yet to come. Here, in this world, we are

often injured and hindered in our warfare. There are many hard things to be done and borne. There are wounds and bruises; there are watchings and fatigues; there are reverses and disappointments. But the end of all things is at hand. For those who "overcome" there will be a conqueror's crown.

In the warfare of this world, the muster on the morning after a victory is often a sorrowful sight. I pity the man who could look at Miss Thompson's famous picture of The Roll-call without deep emotion. Even when peace is proclaimed, the return of victorious regiments is an occasion of very mingled feelings. That man must have had a cold heart who could see the Guards march back into London after the Crimean war without a sigh or a tear.

Thanks be to God, the review day of Christ's victorious army will be a very different thing. There will be none missing in that day. It will be a meeting without regret. It will be "a morning without clouds" and tears! It will make rich amends for all we have suffered in resisting and overcoming the world.

He who saw our gracious Queen distributing the Victoria Cross at the Horse Guards during the Russian war might well be stirred and moved at the sight. But he who saw her come down from her seat to meet a wounded officer who could not walk, and, with her own royal hands, pin his decoration on his bosom, will probably remember it as long as he lives.

But, after all, it was nothing compared to the transactions of that great day, when the Captain of our salvation and His victorious soldiers shall at length meet face to face. What tongue can tell the happiness of that time when we shall lay aside our armor, and "say to the sword, Rest, and be still!" What mind can conceive the blessedness of that hour when we shall see the King in His beauty, and hear these words, "Well done, good and faithful servant and soldier, enter you into the joy of your Lord"? For that glorious day let us wait patiently, for it cannot be far off. In the hope of it let us work, and watch, and pray, and fight on, and resist the world. And let us never forget our Captain's words—

**"In the world you shall have tribulation—but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).**