

The Victory That Has Overcome the World – 1 John 5:1-5

Introduction – Gospel love is like strong whiskey; it grabs your attention and its potency affects your behavior. When you have been conquered by Love, the results are obvious and manifest in what you believe, whom you love, and how you obey. This is why John can so confidently declare that the faith God has given us is the victory that has overcome the world.

A Package Deal (v1) – It is not enough to love the Father; we must love His family, His children, our brothers and sisters. When we bow to the Father, we do so to the One from whom the whole family is named (Eph 3:14-15). In the Fall, we found ourselves estranged from God (Gen 3) and estranged from one another (Gen 4, 1 John 3:11-12). In the Cross, both are taken care of. When we are reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ, we are also reconciled to one another in Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, the Incarnate Son of God.

Practical Family Implications – The axiom, *“the one who loves the one who begot him also loves him who is begotten of him”* has direct implications on our family lives as well. Children may claim to have a deep affection for their parents but can’t stand to be around one another. John says that is perverse.

“Whoever is Believing...” – *“...has been born of God...”* It is important to notice here the tenses of the verbs and the statement being made. Anyone who is found believing that Jesus is the Christ is believing that because something has been done to them. We do not believe and that faith causes us to be born again. We are born again, and being born again we find ourselves believing. Our faith comes from our new birth; our new birth does not come from our faith.

Informed Love (vv2-3) – While love can induce sentimental feelings, sentimental feelings are not the bedrock of love. Love always involves action and that action is often quite opposite to the natural emotions one might have in the moment. Earlier, we learned that God’s love is manifest in the giving of His Son and the Holy Spirit. Love is manifest in action which is informed by God’s law. When we love God and keep His commandments, we know we love the brothers. And this manifest love has two characteristics -

We Do What God Says To Do – *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.”* Remember that Jesus told us that all the law can be summarized in the Two Great Commandments: Love God and love your neighbor. When we need more detail, we can move to the Ten Commandments, and then we can study the OT case law, the Sermon on the Mount, and the teachings of the NT epistles. There, we learn how to love.

It’s a Joy to Do God’s Commands – *“And His commandments are not burdensome.”* The Pharisees loved to bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders (Matt 23:4) and so do those who are religiously motivated, sometimes on themselves but always on others. They glory in their dour moral uprightness; but this uprightness is a turmoil to them and to others. On the other hand, Jesus said to take up His yoke which was easy and light (Matt 11:28-30). When it is a bummer to believe on Jesus, when it is a bummer to love your brother, when it is a bummer to keep God’s law – it is not the yoke of Jesus that you are wearing. When it is God’s will, it is *“good, pleasing and perfect”* (Rom 12:2), the will of an all-wise, all-loving Father who seeks our highest welfare.

Unstoppable Victory (vv4-5) – Our ability and desire to give ourselves away like Jesus comes from faith in God who has overcome the world. The only thing that can overcome the world is from God. Our faith is born of God because it is what overcomes the world. The confession of faith is not just a general faith in God, but in Jesus, the Spirit-Anointed King, the Son of God now installed at the Father’s right hand, the King of kings and Lord of lords – over this world. As I said, this “strong whiskey” grabs your attention and changes your behavior. Which is precisely what God intends for you – He is not interested in you slogging through life in your sins; He wants you to triumph over them.

Victory Over Death – But wait, we say. Sometimes victory doesn’t come. Sometimes Christians are persecuted and killed. Sometimes terrible sickness or disease takes us. Sometimes our words fall on deaf ears, we are mocked and shunned. Where is the rescue? This is what John had in mind when he speaks of *“overcoming”* in Rev 12:11. These martyrs overcame through death, as Jesus did, because resurrection is coming. This resurrection is not into some ethereal nether-land. This resurrection will be into a consummated, glorified, heaven and earth, real and everlasting, where love will reign triumphant, because Christ is reigning triumphant now. Our love and obedience are simply a reflection of this truth given to us through faith in Jesus Christ.