

# 1 John 5:4 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
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<br>1 Jn 1:1-2:27 |                        | Manifestations of Fellowship<br>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 (3SPAI) ton kosmon kai aute estin (3SPAI) e nika e nikesasa (AAPFSN) ton kosmon e pistis hemon

KJV 1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

BGT 1 John 5:4 τι π ν τ γεγεννημ νον κ το θεο νικ τ ν κ σμον· κα α τη σ τ ν ν κ η νικ σαα τ ν κ σμον, π σ τ ις μ ν.

NET 1 John 5:4 because everyone who has been fathered by God conquers the world. This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith.

CSB 1 John 5:4 because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.

ESV 1 John 5:4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.

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

NLT 1 John 5:4 For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.

NRS 1 John 5:4 for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

NJB 1 John 5:4 because every child of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.

NAB 1 John 5:4 for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

YLT 1 John 5:4 because every one who is begotten of God doth overcome the world, and this is the victory that did overcome the world -- our faith;

MIT 1 John 5:4 The reason supporting this is that everyone fathered by God conquers the world. This is the basis of victory that is world-conquering—our faith.

GWN 1 John 5:4 because everyone who has been born from God has won the victory over the world. Our faith is what wins the victory over the world.

BBE 1 John 5:4 Anything which comes from God is able to overcome the world: and the power by which we have overcome the world is our faith.

RSV 1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

NKJ 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.

ASV 1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.

**Amplified** - For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even 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. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **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

**For - For** ([hoti](#)) is a term of explanation. Always pause to ponder asking "What is the writer explaining?" John has just spoken of God's commandments as not burdensome and now explains why they are not burdensome. In other words this verse is signifying the basis of what went before! "The reason why God's commandments are not burdensome is that obedience to them enables the saint to overcome the world." ([Wuest](#))

**James 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](#))

**NET Note** on **for** says "The explicit reason the commandments of God are not burdensome to the believer is given by the ([hoti](#)) clause at the beginning of 1Jn 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.

**Arthur Pink** on **for** and **whatever** - 1 John 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." ([Faith as an Overcomer](#))

*God wants us to be victors, not victims;*

*To grow, not grovel;*

*To soar, not sink;*

*To overcome, not to be overwhelmed.*

--William A. Ward

**Whatever is born** ("fathered by God"-NET Jn 1:12-13+)([gennao](#) - perfect tense, divine passive) **of God overcomes** ([nikao](#) - present tense - generally experiences victory over) **the** (anti-God) **world** ([kosmos](#)) - **Born** is in the perfect tense signifying the permanent effect of the new birth. In other words, everyone God has been saved in the past, continues to give evidence of that fact in the present and will continue to do so in the future and throughout eternity. This is 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 or Born Again (2023 = [66%](#); [24% say they are born-again](#)) and yet they demonstrate no spiritual fruit (What is spiritual fruit?) in their life to validate their claim. For them eternity is far from secure! **Overcomes** in the present tense identifies [Born Again](#) ones as continually overcoming (at least they have that potential to overcome) the fallen **world**. The saint's habit of life to to gain victory over the godless world and while defeats will occur they are the exception and not the rule.

**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 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? 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)!

*The world is no longer my passion; God is!*

*Sinful desires and attractions are no longer beautiful; God and His will are.*

--Daniel Akin

**And this is the victory** ([nike](#) - NEE-kay) **that has overcome** ([nikao](#)) **the world** ([kosmos](#))--**our faith** ([pistis](#)) - "This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith." (NET) **Has overcome** 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 - once and for all at Calvary) signifies that the triumph is assured (cp similar pattern in Rev 3:21+ - first "overcomes" = present tense, second of Jesus = aorist tense). Stated another way believers participate in the "once-for-all" victory of Jesus over the world (John 16:33+) by their faith. 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](#) - perfect tense signifying permanence of His triumph over) the **world** ([kosmos](#))." (Jn 16:33+) Saints can now overcome the world because Jesus overcame

the world. 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!

*Now believers do not fight so much **FOR** victory as **FROM** victory,  
for at the Cross Jesus won the victory over the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)!*

*Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

-- 1 Corinthians 15:57+

*From victory unto victory  
His army shall He lead,  
Till every foe is vanquished,  
and Christ is Lord indeed.*

-- George Duffield, Jr.

If **our faith** is crucial to the victory, what is **our faith** in, for faith must have a firm foundation? In context 1Jn 5:5 says that **our faith** ("believes") is in Jesus the Son of God, the One Who overcame the world, the One Who enables His disciples to continually overcome the world.

*Victory over the world is  
not in self-trust but in Savior trust.*

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+) Paul said he was "dead" to the world, and this would be a chorus every believer should "sing!"

*"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR **VICTORY**?  
O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"  
The sting of death is sin,  
and the power of sin is the law;  
but thanks be to God, Who gives us the **victory**  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Therefore, my beloved brethren,  
be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,  
knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.  
-- Paul (1 Corinthians 15:55-58)*

**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 OLD RUGGED CROSS!). For I am convinced ([peitho](#) - perfect tense - same in 2Ti 1:12+) 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+)

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-+)

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

**Warren Wiersbe** on the **victory** and **our faith** - Our victory is a result of faith, and we grow in faith as we grow in love. The more you love someone, the easier it is to trust him. The more our love for Christ is perfected, the more our faith in Christ is perfected too; because faith and love mature together. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Vance Havner** - The Christian faith is not a way to explain, enjoy or endure this world, but to overcome it.

*Faith is an expectation resting in a promise*

*which results in action.*

-- J Mike Minnix

**John Piper** on **our faith** - **Faith** sees that Jesus is better. That is why **faith** conquers the world. The world held us in bondage by the power of its desires. But now our eyes have been opened by the new birth to see the superior desirability of Jesus. Jesus is better than the desires of the flesh, and better than the desires of the eyes, and better than the riches that strangle us with greed and pride (Mark 4:19) ([Regeneration, Faith, Love](#)).

*Did we in our own strength confide,  
our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabbaoth, His Name,  
from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

**David Smith** says "**Our faith** conquers the world by clinging to the eternal realities... His (John's) doctrine therefore is that faith in the Incarnation (**ED**: WHICH IS MENTIONED IN THE NEXT VERSE 1Jn 5:5 - "believes that Jesus is the Son of God."), 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." (SEE my article on The Expulsive Power of a New Affection)

*Conformity to the world can be overcome  
by nothing but conformity to Jesus.*

--Andrew Murray

**Wuest** asks "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 (1Jn 5:5) with all that that implies results in an individual who gains the victory over the world. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

*Our faith is embraced in the confession that  
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

-- Marvin Vincent

**James Montgomery Boice** on **our faith** ([pistis](#)) - "The third principle of victory is faithfulness, which is, indeed, always involved in the idea of '**faith**' as the Bible defines it. It is not just a past overcoming that John is thinking of therefore [one of the occurrences of this word is in the aorist tense], but also a present overcoming [the other two occurrences are present] through a continuing and persevering **faith** in Jesus Christ. This is the same sense in which the word is used in Christ's messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation, where the phrase '**to him who overcomes**' occurs seven times. There, as in John, it is not a superior class of Christians that is involved, nor those who do some great work as the world might evaluate it. It is rather those who remain faithful to the truth concerning Jesus as the Christ and who continue to serve Him. This the Christians to whom John is writing have done through their faithfulness in view of the Gnostic threat, and this all who truly know the Lord will do also." (Borrow [Epistles of John page 158](#))

*Faith in faith is just positive thinking,  
but faith in Jesus is salvation*

-- Adrian Rogers

**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.

*Faith is the victory?  
Faith is the victory?  
Oh, glorious victory,  
That overcomes the world.*

-- John Yates

*Faith breaks the enslaving spell  
of the world's allurements...  
Faith leads us into obedience  
with freedom and joy.*

**John Piper** sums up 1 John 5:3-4 - So the train of thought goes like this: The new birth happens as we are brought into contact with the living and abiding word, the gospel. The first effect of this new birth is that we see and receive God and his Son and work and his will as supremely beautiful and valuable. That's faith. This faith overcomes the world, that is, it overcomes the enslaving power of the world to be our supreme treasure. Faith breaks the enslaving spell of the world's allurements. By doing that, faith leads us into obedience with freedom and joy. God and His holy (commandments) will look beautiful and not burdensome. The new birth has taken the blinders off. We see things for what they are. We are free to obey with joy.

*You cannot play with sin  
and overcome the world!*

-- Bruce Hurt

*Nothing is more powerful to overcome  
temptation than the fear of God.*

-- John Calvin

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**Born** (begotten, father of, conceived) (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. The most notable uses of **gennao** are in the description of Jesus' virgin birth in which He was supernaturally "**conceived** (gennao) in her (Mary) of the Holy Spirit." (Mt 1:20) and His subsequent supernatural resurrection in which He is described as "**begotten** (gennao)." (Acts 13:33).

**Gennao** describes the commencement of life where previously none had existed. In fact most of the uses of gennao refer to biology (birth) but as noted some refer to spirituality (new birth). **Gennao** can refer literally to begetting or conceiving a child or figuratively to spiritually "begetting" a person, resulting in them finding new life when they are born again (Jn 3:3, 5) In a similar use Paul presents himself as the spiritual father of the Corinthians. (1Cor 4:15)

**Born** (**gennao** - all uses are in the perfect tense) is found 10x in First John - 1Jn 2:29; 1Jn 3:9 (2x); 1Jn 4:7; 1Jn 5:1 (3x); 1Jn 5:4; 1Jn 5:18 (2x). In 1Jn 3:14 he uses another term "passed out of" (*metabaino*) death into life."

**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)! Nikao "was a popular term 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." (**MacArthur**)

**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." (**Erdmans Publishing** - used by permission)

*Holiness is not freedom from temptation,  
but power to overcome temptation.*

--G. Campbell Morgan

**NIKAO** - 28X/24V - **conquer(1), conquering(1), overcame(2), overcome(11), overcomes(10), overpowers(1), prevail(1), victorious(1)**. Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:33; Rom. 3:4; Rom. 12:21; 1 Jn. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:14;

1 Jn. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:4; 1 Jn. 5:5; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 2:11; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 2:26; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 11:7; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 13:7; Rev. 15:2; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 21:7

*An overcomer is not a special class of believers describes every believer.*

*We are overcomers because we have been born of God.*

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 even in the midst of tribulations and hostility toward Christianity and they do so because they are in Christ, the ultimate Overcomer. And the fact that they are living continuously (notice I did not say "perfectly"! ) as overcomers is in fact evidence that they are genuine believers. False believers will eventually be ensnared irreparably by the world system run by Satan! True believers will stand firm against Satan's seductions for they stand on (in) the Rock Christ Jesus (Ps 19:14)!

Rev 2:7+ '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+ '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+ '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+ '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+ '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+ "'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+ '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.

**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!

***World** refers to the evil, organized system under Satan's dominion that is opposed to God and His purposes.*

-- Steven Cole

**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)."

**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. ([Faith as an Overcomer](#))

**David Smith** says **kosmos** is "the sum of all the forces antagonistic to the spiritual life."

**R C 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." (Synonyms of the NT)

Jesus repeatedly addressed the word in His prayer 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 [A Look at "κόσμος" 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](#)")

**Victory** ([3529](#))(**nike**) means overcoming of an enemy or antagonist. The word clearly implies warfare and in the NT speaks of our ongoing, daily spiritual warfare with invisible forces, demons (Eph 6:12+) and **fallen flesh**, as well as the visible force of the **godless world**. Nike means "victory, or the power that confers victory." (see [online 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

**Charles Allen** - In the Bible there are three distinctive meanings of grace; it means the mercy and active love of God; it means the winsome attractiveness of God; it means **the strength of God to overcome**.

**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** (see [online 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

**Faith** (4102) [pistis](#) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. For more on faith see Dr Wayne Grudem's book [Systematic Theology](#) - scroll to page 616, for an excellent, uncompromising, imminently readable resource for the layperson.

**Stephen Olford** - Faith touches the invisible; calls those things which are not as though they are; laughs at impossibilities and cries, "It shall be done." Faith claims (all the power of a risen Christ); commands (the mountains of spiritual barriers to be removed and they are removed); and conquers (Heb. 11 – this is the victory, even your faith).

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### Ian Paisley - The Birth, the Battle and the Belief

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4

#### I. The Tremendous Birth

"For whatsoever is born of God"

There is a birth which is human and that which is born of the flesh is flesh and remains flesh. You can have religious flesh but it is still flesh. There is a birth that is divine and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. It is that birth which is the one thing needful. Are you born again?

#### II. The Terrible Battle

"overcometh the world"

The spiritual and the natural are locked in the most terrific battle of all ages. It is a life or death struggle and never ceases the tomb side of the grave. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8)

The flesh must die in order that the Spirit can reign.

#### III. The Triumphant Belief

"this is the victory which overcometh the world even our faith"

Have I that faith

Which looks to Christ

And overcomes the world and sin

Receives Him, Prophet, Priest and King

And makes the conscience clear? Lord, increase my faith!

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### Vance Havner -True Christianity

1. True Christianity must be vital—it must have life.
2. It must be vocal—it must be an articulate faith.
3. It must be visible—showing up in daily conduct.
4. It ought to be vivid—glowing, not pale and colorless.
5. And it ought to be victorious for "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

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### James Smith - DOST THOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF GOD? John 9:35.

If ye do believe on the Son of God—

1. Then you have no doubt about His divinity (Matt. 16:16).
  2. Then you have repented of your sins (Acts 20:21).
  3. Then you have EVERLASTING LIFE (John 3:36).
  4. Then you are JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS (Acts 13:38-39).
  5. Then your HEART IS BEING PURIFIED (Acts 15:9; Heb. 9:14).
  6. Then you are a WORKER BY LOVE (Gal. 5:6).
  7. Then you have VICTORY OVER THE WORLD (1 John 5:4).
  8. Then you look upon THE THINGS UNSEEN (Heb. 11:1:2 Cor. 4:18).
  9. Then you SEEK FOR SOULS. "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of souls" (1 Peter 1:9).
- 

**Adrian Rogers** - By faith in His name, His name has made this man strong. Acts 3:16

Think of all that comes to us by faith:

- Salvation—"Since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).
  - The Holy Spirit—"We receive "the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14).
  - Victory—"This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith" (1 John 5:4).
  - Victory over Satan—"Take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16).
  - Sanctification—Jesus told us that we were made holy "by faith" in Him (Acts 26:18).
- 

**Peter Kennedy - Peace in Penn's Woodlands** [From Generation to Generation: Devotional Thoughts](#)

"This is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith."—1 John 5:4

William Penn was the son of a famous British Admiral in the seventeenth century. He became a Christian in the Quaker church at age twenty-two. Following his father's death Penn was bequeathed a large area of land in North America that became known as Pennsylvania—Penn's woodlands. Penn was determined to govern Pennsylvania according to God's commandments.

The Indians of Pennsylvania hated the white man's settlements. Yet Penn sought a peace that would last. At the great elm at Shakamaxon Penn met with the local tribes. There they made the only treaty between Europeans and Native Americans that did not end in bloodshed. Penn's love in Christ for humanity was so compelling that both sides kept the peace.

In his sermon "A Call to Christendom" Penn said, "For in Christ Jesus, the light of the world, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; redemption and glory. They are hid from the worldly Christian, from all who are captivated by the lusts of the world. For whoever sees them must come to Christ Jesus, the true light of their consciences, bring their deeds to him, love him and obey him."

Today in prayer, ask the Lord to strengthen your faith so that the world may know the victory of love.

"It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it."—Dr. J. R. Miller

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**Vance Havner - "This Is the Victory"**

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

The world is too much with us nowadays. We cannot explain it for God holds that secret and the world by its wisdom knows not God. We cannot endure it by a Stoic stiff-upper-lip philosophy. Thousands are trying to bluff through, whistling their way past the graveyard, wearing the royal robes of a put-on fortitude over the sackcloth of inner wretchedness (2 Kings 6:30). We cannot enjoy the world for "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," it is all a lifeless counterfeit.

But we can overcome the world and any of us, regardless of circumstance, can get in on this. Christ did not dodge or deny the fact of trouble: he declared plainly that in this world we might expect it. But he follows it with, "Be of good cheer." He overcame the world and whoever is born of God and believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4, 5).

This business of overcoming the world is open to you. You may be an invalid, you may be in straits, you may be poor and ignorant and despised, but there is no condition in which you may be placed that can keep you from overcoming the world if you will receive him and let him live his overcoming life in you. "Be of good cheer." He is the way out.

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## Robert Neighbour - We Know by Our Victory Over the World

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5).

"He that is born of God overcometh the world."

We do not mean that all Christians live a life of absolute separation, or of absolute victory. All too many Christians stumble and follow the world.

What we do mean is this: Every believer, because he is born of God, has within his reach a victory, supreme and complete, if he, by faith, will claim it. This much is sure — all overcomers may know they are born of God.

This life of victory is altogether impossible to the unregenerate; they cannot, under any condition, overcome the world. They are of the world; yea, they are the world.

In these days, when so many are walking arm in arm with the world, it will prove helpful to consider, once more, the believer's attitude, Scripturally, to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life — the things which dominate the men of the world.

1. The believer is called out of the world, and is commanded to "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).

2. The believer is not of the world; his citizenship is not of the world; his treasures are not of the world. He is in the world, but the world must not be in him. He may possess things that worldly men possess, but these things do not possess him; they must not form the pulse and purpose of his life.

3. The believer should crucify the world; this is his glory: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

In truth, those who are in Christ, walking in Him, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

4. The believer is promised victory over the world. Through Christ Jesus "we are more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37).

In Christ Jesus, we are made partakers of "His triumph" (see II Cor. 2:14).

Jesus Christ met Satan and vanquished him: He spoiled him and all of his principalities and powers; therefore, He assures His victory to His born-again ones.

When this victory is realized in a believer's life, he knows that he is born of God

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### Vance Havner - Any Day Is V-Day!

When we are passing through great trial and testing we are inclined to wait until the storm is over and the battle ended before we celebrate victory. We lift our weary and tear-dimmed eyes to some blessed day ahead or to heaven itself and sigh for ultimate deliverance. We plod along through gloomy days and desolate nights looking for light at the end of the tunnel. Today is just another dark chapter to be endured.

*Our Waterloo is behind us and  
we are engaged only in mopping-up operations!*

But to the Christian, V-Day can be today, no matter what the circumstances are. "... this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Our victory was won at Calvary and the open grave. Our Waterloo is behind us and we are engaged only in mopping-up operations! When the battle is fiercest and no end seems in sight, if we have walked by faith and triumphed over fear in spite of feelings and conditions, that is victory NOW and we need not wait to celebrate.

I am passing now through a time of great trial. I do not know what the outcome will be. I do not know when clouds will lift and the burden fall. I am not merely trying to hold out until then. Today can be a triumph as great and maybe even greater than when the storm abates and the battle ends. I stand in Christ complete. The full and final realization of His triumph has not yet come. We see not yet all things put under Him but we see Jesus and in Him everything is as good as done. This IS the victory! There is no doubt as to the outcome. Sin, death, and the devil are still here, disease and disaster, heartbreak and bereavement are with us but they are defeated foes and we have but to wait a little while to see them all forever past.

*To move through this world  
as a citizen of heaven is victory now.*

The Christian belongs to a Kingdom of the heart, an invisible world at present, but one day it will be set up visibly right here on earth. Meanwhile we taste even now the powers of that age to come and enjoy foretastes of glory before the King returns. To move through this world as a citizen of heaven is victory now. Principalities and powers battle us fiercely but greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, and by the shield of faith we can ward off the fiery darts of the Wicked One. The outcome is sure, there is not a moment's doubt as to how it will all come out. The devil is on the way out although he may stir up quite a rumpus in his exit.

You can end this drab day with celebration if you live it by the faith of the Son of God. We do not have to wait until we see how it will turn out. It has already turned out! This is the marvelous truth of the gospel that we start from victory and work from it. The ultimate outcome merely climaxes what is guaranteed from the start.

You do not have to stand on Jordan's stormy banks and cast a wishful eye to a distant Canaan. We are in Beulah Land now. We can shout hallelujah over the potential until we wait for the actual. True, we do not live by feeling but if all things are working together for good there ought to be some happiness now!

*Let us celebrate victory provided in the past, possible in the present,  
perfected in the future but victory anytime! This IS V-Day!*

Let us celebrate victory provided in the past, possible in the present, perfected in the future but victory anytime! This IS V-Day! Ours is the Victor and we follow in the train of His triumph. All things are ours already and we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

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### **Moravian Daily Texts**

And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. 1 John 5:4

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness;  
take it to the Lord in prayer!

God of our strength and salvation, we give you thanks for the courage to face each day, each decision, and each moment with the assurance of your presence among us. Amen

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### **Conflict is Inevitable** 1 John 5:4 Genesis 21:9-21

After the birth of Isaac, the true nature of Ishmael was revealed. Nothing of his life is known before Isaac's birth.

Even this points out a significant truth for the believer. It is not until a person receives the new nature, through receiving Christ as Saviour, that he discovers the real character of his old nature.

The discovery is a painful one and even causes some to doubt their salvation as they see the struggle taking place in their lives. However, the very fact that there is conflict is proof of salvation.

There is no conflict when there is only the old nature. But when the new nature comes in to control the life, the old nature sets up an intense conflict.

Paul referred to this conflict when he said, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

This is the condition that results when a person receives Christ as Saviour. He receives a new nature, which is in opposition to the old nature. There is conflict between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of bondage.

Even as in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, where one had to be expelled, the believer cannot yield to both natures but must choose the one he will obey.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:  
and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"

-- 1 John 5:4

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## Vance Havner - Defense Line of a Lost Cause

While I was preaching in Petersburg, Virginia, I spent two mornings at a lovely lake near the old earthworks of the Confederate defense line where men fought and died one hundred years ago. Someone has told of two brothers who fought on opposite sides in that great struggle. They were buried in the same grave and the marker carried this inscription: "Only God knows who was right." States Rights was a just cause, but we are seeing the final defeat of it in these days of growing centralization of power in Washington. The Confederacy lost, and around Petersburg ragged, hungry men made a last stand against overwhelming odds. It was the last defense line of a lost cause.

This set me thinking about another cause. The church has gone on the defensive these days. She has thrown up barricades and dug in to withstand the onslaughts of Communism, secularism and all other foes. This is bad strategy. Ours is not a lost cause. "... this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Almost every day I read or hear religious leaders express darkest pessimism and defeatism. Our best ambition seems to be to hold our own. "The best defense is an offense," but we are as terrified as the Israelites before Goliath, and we take counsel of our fears. Nobody seems remotely inclined to take the initiative.

I read of a little band of desperate soldiers encompassed by great odds. The captain had no notion of surrendering. "Men, we are surrounded," he shouted, "don't let one of them escape!" Like Elisha at Dothan, the church needs to turn a deaf ear to distraught alarmists who see only the enemy in the valley. We need to look up where heavenly hosts surround us and where the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him to deliver them.

Ours is not the last defense line of a lost cause. We were here first. The meek shall inherit the earth and the saints shall judge the world. We are not going to convert the world or Christianize it, but we can evangelize it. And we can Christianize more of it than we are doing now. There are citadels that can be taken, strongholds of evil that can be demolished. We need some Davids who will call Goliath's bluff. We need more Gideon's bands to scatter the Midianites. We were never meant to hide behind our breastworks and maintain the status quo until Jesus comes. The status needs to be "un-quoed"! In this warfare there is no "holding our own." If we do not advance, we retreat. There is no substitute for victory.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. That does not mean that hell's armies cannot break our defenses. It means that hell's bulwarks cannot withstand our assault. Consolidating all our forces into one ecumenical host is not the answer. The early church at Jerusalem had dug in, but persecution scattered them everywhere preaching the Word. We need to be diffused, not consolidated. Nor shall we prevail by closing ranks in a motley mob infiltrated by subversives and infested with traitors. We need a hard core of commandos who will advance without any plans to return, spearheads of expendables who do not count their lives dear. Our comfortable Sunday-morning regulars, well-uniformed and overloaded with top brass, have entrenched themselves in million-dollar fortresses, but this expensive defense line is not holding. It is beset without and within. God never mobilized us merely to man bases already held. He called us to carry the battle to the foe.

"... speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:" (Exodus 14:15). Ours is not the defense line of a lost cause.

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## Robert Neighbour - The Faith That Overcomes

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5).

There are three great foes that beset the Christian's pathway. These foes are strong against all who love the Lord. They are the world, the flesh and the devil. They attack from around, from within and from above.

1. In meeting the world, God has provided us with victorious faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Of course, this faith is the exclusive possession of those who are born of God and who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The unbelievers are children of the wicked one. The wicked one is the prince of this world and his children walk according to the course of the world.

Believers are called out of the world, they are not of the world. The very fact that they are born from above is proof sufficient that the world hateth them.

Believers overcome the world by faith because faith aligns them with the great Overcomer, the Lord Jesus Christ. His victory is their victory; they are led in the train of His triumphs.

Believers overcome the world by faith because they go outside the camp with their Lord; they hold in their vision another age and a better, and refuse to be conformed to this one.

2. In meeting the flesh God provides us with a victorious faith. The flesh is our "old man," our self life — the deadly foe of the "new man," the life begotten of God.

Through the "hearing of faith" the Spirit was received; the Spirit wars against the flesh; if we walk in the Spirit we are victors and will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; finally, this walk is a walk of faith for "we walk by faith and not by sight." Thus our victory over the flesh is through the indwelling Spirit, but is also by faith.

3. In meeting the devil God has provided us a victorious faith. It is "the shield of faith that overcomes all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Satan is easily overcome by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony — but both the saving, sheltering Blood, and the testimony of saints is the accomplishment of faith.

Thus faith holds an important place in the overcoming life.

"O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe;  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe.

"That will not murmur or complain,  
Beneath the chastening rod,  
But, in the hour of grief or pain,  
Will lean upon its God.

"A faith that shines more bright and clear  
When tempests rage without;  
And when in danger knows no fear,  
In darkness feels no doubt.

"Lord, give us such a faith as this,  
And then, whate'er may come,  
We'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss  
Of an eternal home

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This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 1 JOHN 5:4

In his book *Forever Triumphant*, F. J. Huegel (BORROW [Forever Triumphant. The Secret of Victory in the Christian Life](#)) told a story that came out of World War II. After General Jonathan Wainwright was captured by the Japanese, he was held prisoner in a Manchurian concentration camp. Cruelly treated, he became "a broken, crushed, hopeless, starving man." Finally the Japanese surrendered and the war ended. A United States army colonel was sent to the camp to announce personally to the general that Japan had been defeated and that he was free and in command. After Wainwright heard the news, he returned to his quarters and was confronted by some guards who began to mistreat him as they had done in the past. Wainwright, however, with the news of the allied victory still fresh in his mind, declared with authority, "No, I am in command here! These are my orders." Huegel observed that from that moment on, General Wainwright was in control.

Huegel made this application: "Have you been informed of the victory of your Savior in the greatest conflict of the ages? . . . Then rise up to assert your rights. . . . Never again go under when the enemy comes to oppress. Claim the victory in Jesus' Name." —R. W. D. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE A VICTOR, NOT A VICTIM

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**ILLUSTRATION OF OUR POSITION, PRIVILEGE AND POWER TO OVERCOME THE WORLD BECAUSE EVERY BELIEVER IS IN CHRIST** - Warren Wiersbe tells about...

A Civil War veteran used to wander from place to place, begging a bed and bite to eat and always talking about his friend "Mr. Lincoln." Because of his injuries, he was unable to hold a steady job. But as long as he could keep going, he would chat about his beloved President.

"You say you knew Mr. Lincoln," a skeptical bystander retorted one day. "I'm not so sure you did. Prove it!"

The old man replied, "Why, sure, I can prove it. In fact, I have a piece of paper here that Mr. Lincoln himself signed and gave to me."

From his old wallet, the man took out a much-folded piece of paper and showed it to the man.

"I'm not much for reading," he apologized, "but I know that's Mr. Lincoln's signature."

"Man, do you know what you have here?" one of the spectators asked. "You have a generous federal pension authorized by President Lincoln. You don't have to walk around like a poor beggar! Mr. Lincoln has made you rich!"

To paraphrase what John wrote: "You Christians do not have to walk around defeated, because Jesus Christ has made you victors! He has defeated every enemy and you share His victory. Now, by faith, claim His victory."

The key, of course, is faith, but this has always been God's key to victory. The great men and women named in Hebrews 11 all won their victories "by faith." They simply took God at His word and acted on it, and He honored their faith and gave them victory. Faith is not simply saying that what God says is true; true faith is acting on what God says because it is true. Someone has said that faith is not so much believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequence.

Victorious faith is the result of maturing love. The better we come to know and love Jesus Christ, the easier it is to trust Him with the needs and battles of life. It is important that this maturing love become a regular and a practical thing in our daily lives. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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**Dr. Stephen Olford states**, "The triumphant believer is one who fights not for victory, but from victory. The battle has already been won at Calvary and it is the believer's privilege and joy to celebrate that victory in every situation of daily life."

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**J Mike Minnix** - Eighty soldiers from Fort Dix were fighting a forest fire, when a pilot flying overhead dropped three weighted notes. With the notes he gave directions on how the firefighters were to escape the flames. He could see from above a way of escape which they could not see from below. When they read the note, they fled. They did not doubt the authority of the pilot, but immediately fled to safety. They had a message of escape that came from above. That is what God offers our world. A message of safety and salvation that comes from above.

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**Adrian Rogers** - Are you an overcomer? I mean honestly, are you an overcomer? Or, are you just simply trying to hold on 'til Jesus gets here? Are you like that lady who said, "I can overcome anything but temptation?" Now, there are a lot of folks like that. I mean, they talk a lot about being overcomers, but they are not overcomers, they are overcome. They sing "Victory in Jesus," but they are (not) victors. They are victims and they do not live a life of continuous, perpetual victory and overcoming. Now my dear friend, an overcoming Christian is not a super Christian. He is a normal Christian. The Christian who is not overcoming is a sub-normal Christian. It is God's plan. It is God's blueprint for you—day by day, this day, and the rest of your life— that become an overcomer. And, when we meet one another around here in the church and we walk up and I say, "Bob, how are you doing?" He ought to say, "I'm overcoming." "Margaret, how are you doing?" "I'm overcoming. I am living a life of victory, a life of overcoming." ([See sermon "Overcoming"](#))

*Faith...is not blindly believing in spite of evidence,  
it is boldly obeying in spite of consequences.*

Faith is not simply believing that what God says is true. Faith is acting upon it because it is true. May I say that again? Faith is not simply believing that what God says is true, faith is acting upon it because it is true. Faith is not blindly believing in spite of evidence. Faith is something else. It is acting and it is obeying in spite of consequences. Let me say it again. It is not blindly believing in spite of evidence, it is boldly obeying in spite of consequences. Regardless of the consequences, regardless of whether it seems right or wrong to you in the flesh, you say, "If God said it I'll do it." Now, when you begin to have enough faith to say, "I'm going to obey God simply by faith." You know the reason that many of us don't obey God? We really just don't believe God....

Why does, how does belief help you to overcome. Well you see, what belief does is it makes Jesus Christ real to you, real to you. You see, look in 1Jn 5:5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. I'm not talking about believing that abstractly, but when you believe that the Son of God is in you. And, what is Jesus? Prophet, priest and king. As prophet, He will enlighten you. As priest, He will intercede for you. As king, He will clear the way for you and supply every need that you have. Jesus Christ becomes a bright living reality to you. And, if Jesus Christ is not a bright living reality to you, you'll never really overcome. ([See sermon "Overcoming"](#))

*Look full into His wonderful face  
and the things of earth will go strangely dim  
in the light of His glory and grace.*

## 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](#))

## 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](#)

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](#)

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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#### **C H Spurgeon - Morning and Evening - The victory of faith** (see sermon [The Victory of Faith](#))

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4

Faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homoeopathically. You say, “That is a singular idea.” So it may be. The principle is that “like cures like.” So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the fear of the world? By the fear of God, “Now,” says the world, “if you do not do this I will take away your life. If you do not bow down before my false god, you shall be put in yonder burning fiery furnace.” “But,” says the man of faith, “I fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. True, I may dread you, but I have a greater fear than that. I fear lest I should displease God; I tremble lest I should offend my Sovereign.” So the one fear counterbalances the other. How does faith overthrow the world’s hopes? “There,” says the world, “I will give you this, I will give you that, if you will be my disciple. There is a hope for you; you shall be rich, you shall be great.” But, faith says, “I have a hope laid up in heaven; a hope which fadeth not away, eternal, incorrupt, a golden hope, a crown of life;” and the hope of glory overcomes all the hopes of the world. “Ah!” says the world, “Why not follow the example of your fellows?” “Because,” says faith, “I will follow the example of Christ.” If the world puts one example before us, faith puts another. “Oh, follow the example of such an one; he is wise, and great, and good,” says the world. Says faith, “I will follow Christ; he is the wisest, the greatest, and the best.” It overcomes example by example; “Well,” says the world, “since you will not be conquered by all this, come, I will love you; you shall be my friend.” Faith says, “He that is the friend of this world, cannot be the friend of God. God loves me.”

FOR MEDITATION: Faith can say to society, self, Satan and sin, “Anything you can give, Christ can give better” (Ephesians 2:1–8).

“Have I that faith which looks to Christ,  
O’ercomes the world and sin—  
Receives him Prophet, Priest, and King,  
And makes the conscience clean?”

“If I this precious grace possess,  
All praise is due to thee;  
If not, I seek it from thy hands;  
Now grant it, Lord, to me.”

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**Spurgeon** - From the opening to the conclusion, love is the manner, love the matter, love the motive, and love the aim

**Spurgeon** - Reason is a very good thing, and nobody should find fault with it. Reason is a candle: but faith is a sun.

**Spurgeon** - This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might; if it were, we might soon win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work; for the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually; like the chameleon, it hath all the colours of the rainbow; and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another. Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with. Let me just mention some of the forms in which the Christian overcomes the world.....Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish; it is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, “Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular.....”

Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired. When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity, we may well tremble and fear...it is when all men speak well of us, that woe is unto us. (see sermon [The Victory of Faith](#))

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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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**Alexander Maclaren** - The world conquers me when it succeeds in hindering me from seeing, loving, holding communion with, and serving my Father, God. I conquer it when I lay my hand upon it and force it to help me to get nearer Him, to get more like Him, to think oftener of Him, to do His will more gladly and more constantly. The one victory over the world is to bend it to serve me in the highest things—the attainment of a clearer vision of the divine nature, the attainment of a deeper love to God Himself, and a more glad consecration and service to Him. That is the victory—when you can make the world a ladder to lift you to God. When the world comes between you and God as an obscuring screen, it has conquered you. When the world comes between you and God as a transparent medium you have conquered it. To win victory is to get it beneath your feet and stand upon it, and reach up thereby to God. (Full message [Faith Conquering the World](#))

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**Max Lucado - Doing What's Right** 1 JOHN 5:4

You get impatient with your own life, trying to master a habit or control a sin—and in your frustration begin to wonder where the power of God is. Be patient. God is using today's difficulties to strengthen you for tomorrow. He is equipping you. The God who makes things grow will help you bear fruit.

Dwell on the fact that God lives within you. Think about the power that gives you life. The realization that God is dwelling within you may change the places you want to go and the things you want to do today. Do what is right this week, whatever it is, whatever comes down the path, whatever problems and dilemmas you face—just do what's right. Maybe no one else is doing what's right, but you do what's right. You be honest. You take a stand. You be true. After all, regardless of what you do, God does what is right: he saves you with his grace. - [God's Inspirational Promises: A Guide to Living a Life of ... - Page 170](#)

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**David Jeremiah - VICTORIOUS WARRIORS** 1 JOHN 5:4

The Bible says that Satan's purpose is to blind sinners and beguile Christians, and to hurt and discourage those who belong to God. He will do anything to disturb the mind, deceive the heart, and defeat life. He is actively involved in the world today, and if you read your Bible you'll find he has always been active: He led Lot into Sodom, got Peter to deny Christ, made Annanias and Sapphira lie to the church, and even dared attack Jesus Christ. If he isn't afraid to attack the Lord of glory, you should not be surprised to discover that he is willing to attack the most mature Christian. He wants to bring division into the church today, paralyzing its ministry and scandalizing its leaders.

Yet the Word of God tells us that this warfare is one for which we may prepare. We can walk into a hostile environment and do warfare for God and not be defeated. Our Commander-in-Chief has already won the war, and He is waiting for us to get in on the victory. God can help us to learn how to be victorious warriors in the great spiritual battle. (See [David Jeremiah Morning and Evening Devotions: Holy Moments](#))

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**Max Lucado** - What is unique about the kingdom of God is that you are assured of victory. You have won! If you have no faith in the future, then you have no power in the present. If you have no faith in the life beyond this life, then your present life is going to be powerless. But if you believe in the future and are assured of victory, then there should be a dance in your step and a smile on your face.

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**Kay Arthur** - Read Jesus' messages to the churches in Revelation 2–3. Look at the rewards given to overcomers and you'll see that true believers are overcomers. Because Christ is in us and because He, by the Holy Spirit, enables us to keep His commandments, we are able to overcome the world!

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**Criswell Freeman** - The world makes promises that it simply cannot fulfill. It promises happiness, contentment, prosperity, and abundance. But genuine, lasting abundance is not a function of worldly possessions, it is a function of our thoughts, our actions, and the relationship we choose to create with our God. The world's promises are incomplete and illusory; God's promises are unfulfilling.

We must build our lives on the firm foundation of God's promises . . . nothing else will suffice. (Borrow [Purpose for everyday living : finding God in your everyday life](#))

Have the promises of the world ever been a disappointment in your life? If so, what have you learned and how have you changed from that experience?

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### **The Weapons of Faith - 1 JOHN 5:4 RSV - Billy Graham**

One of Satan's sly devices is to divert our minds from the help God offers us when we struggle against evil, telling us we have to fight the battle alone. But God knows we need His help.

The Bible warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). What would you do if you met a lion? You'd probably run, and you'd probably grab any weapon you could to fend it off if it attacked.

And that should be our strategy in our struggles against evil. When evil and temptation stalk us, our first response should be to flee. And when they still attack, we should use every weapon we have to drive them away. The good news is this: God has provided the weapons! His Word, His angels, His Spirit, the encouragement and prayers of our brothers and sisters in Christ—these and more are weapons God provides.

We aren't in this battle alone—so why act like it? (Borrow [Hope for Each Day Words of Wisdom and Faith](#))

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**EDWARD B. PUSEY.** What is victory over the world? It is to cut off, as far as we may, every hold which everything out of God has over us, to study wherein we are weak, and there seek in His strength to be made strong. Be your temptation the love of pleasure, it is to forego it, if of food, to restrain it; if of praise, to put forward others rather than yourself; if of being right in the sight of men, be content to be misjudged, and to keep silence; if of self-indulgence, use hardness, if of display, cut off the occasions and give to the poor, if of having thine own will, practice the submission of it to the wills of others.

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**Henry Blackaby - SPIRIT-POWERED VICTORY - 1 John 5:4** (See [Being Still With God Every Day: Discovering God's Plan for ... - Page 290](#))

We all like to succeed, don't we? And there is no greater triumph than what Jesus accomplished on the cross: His victory over the power of sin and death enables us to be in relationship with God Almighty, our heavenly Father.

The victorious Christian life is lived out day by day, hour by hour, as we—by the power of God's Spirit—break sinful patterns in our lives and seek to obey God. The victorious Christian life is the Spirit's response to our faith.

God gave us the gift of His Holy Spirit, and when we seek to obey God's will, the Spirit's power is released in us. According to Ephesians 1:19–20, that power is the same "mighty power which [God] worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places."

The strength to overcome is a gift of God—and we have a great deal more power than we know. What will you do today to access that power and experience fresh victories in your life?

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**David Jeremiah - VICTORIOUS WARRIORS 1 JOHN 5:4** (Borrow [Sanctuary : finding moments of refuge](#))

The Bible says that Satan's purpose is to blind sinners and beguile Christians, and to hurt and discourage those who belong to God. He will do anything to disturb the mind, deceive the heart, and defeat life. He is actively involved in the world today, and if you read your Bible you'll find he has always been active: He led Lot into Sodom, got Peter to deny Christ, made Annanias and Sapphira lie to the church, and even dared attack Jesus Christ. If he isn't afraid to attack the Lord of glory, you should not be surprised to discover that he is willing to attack the most mature Christian. He wants to bring division into the church today, paralyzing its ministry and scandalizing its leaders.

Yet the Word of God tells us that this warfare is one for which we may prepare. We can walk into a hostile environment and do warfare for God and not be defeated. Our Commander-in-Chief has already won the war, and He is waiting for us to get in on the victory. God can help us to learn how to be victorious warriors in the great spiritual battle.

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**B F Westcott** - The Faith presses upon man his noblest desires as obligations, and makes their attainment possible by the gift of the Spirit.

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**Charles Gordon** - If we aspire to walk in the power of the new life, we must cast away all hindrances, and it must cost something we really value.

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**Charles Stanley** - 1 John 5:4 Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Tomorrow she has to face the committee and tell them what she thinks. Last month they asked her to review books for a children's reading club, and she feels that three of the books are detrimental and advocate unbiblical values. She also knows that most of the committee members are not believers and will not understand her arguments.

As she thinks about the conflict to come, panic sets in. It isn't until she recalls past victories in the Lord that she calms down and recognizes that the battle is really His.

Look at David's words of positive confession before he faced the sneering giant, Goliath: "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37 NASB).

David could say with unwavering confidence that God would give him the resounding victory. He called to mind former defenseless times when God delivered him from destruction, and he relied on God's might to do it again.

What giant looms in your future? What battle are you headed for today? Are you claiming the victory right now in His name? Always remember—you have a faith that conquers.

Father God, there are giants ahead—tremendous battles to face. Give me the faith that conquers. I claim the victory right now in Your name.

[On Holy Ground: A Daily Devotional - Page 16](#)

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**A W Tozer - Of Faith and Fear** (See [The Quotable Tozer: A Topical Compilation of the Wisdom](#))

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. —1 John 5:4

No matter what the circumstances, we Christians should keep our heads. God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind. It is a dismal thing to see a son of heaven cringe in terror before the sons of earth. We are taught by the Holy Spirit in Scriptures of truth that fear is a kind of prison for the mind and that by it we may spend a lifetime in bondage.

To recoil from the approach of mental or physical pain is natural, but to allow our minds to become terrorized is quite another thing. The first is a reflex action; the latter is the result of sin and is a work of the devil to bring us into bondage. Terror is or should be foreign to the redeemed mind.

True faith delivers from fear by consciously interposing God between it and the object that would make it afraid. The soul that lives in God is surrounded by the divine Presence so that no enemy can approach it without first disposing of God, a palpable impossibility.

This is the victory that overcometh low spirits, a sinking heart, whispers of the devil and all the discouragements of this lower world—even our faith.

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**A W Tozer - Playing at Religion** - [Mornings with Tozer : daily devotional readings ...](#) (borrow) (See [Mornings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 15](#))

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. (1 John 5:4)

When our faith becomes obedience to our Savior, then it is true faith, indeed! The difficulty we modern Christians face is not misunderstanding the Bible, but persuading our untamed hearts to accept its plain instruction. Our problem is to get the consent of our world-loving minds to make Jesus Lord in fact, as well as in word. For it is one thing to say, "Lord, Lord," and quite another thing to obey the Lord's commandments.

We may sing "Crown Him Lord of all," and rejoice in the tones of the loud organ and the deep melody in harmonious voices, but still we have done nothing until we have left the world and set our faces toward the City of God in hard practical reality.

The world's spirit is strong and it can play at religion with every appearance of sincerity. It can have fits of conscience (particularly during Lent)! It will contribute to charitable causes and campaigns on behalf of the poor, but all with its own condition: "Let Christ keep His distance and never assert His Lordship." This it positively will not endure!

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**Adrian Rogers** - This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. 1 John 5:4

How do you ever gain victory over the wild array of temptations in your life? When you understand how the devil is working, how the flesh is working, and how the world is working, you begin to see the keys to defeating them.

When battling against our external foe—the world—the key word to remember is faith. It is faith that overcomes the world. John continues in verse 5: “And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” It is not just faith in a general sense that overcomes the world. Faith that sees Jesus as the Son of God is conquering faith.

Think of all that comes to us by faith:

- Salvation—“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).
- The fullness of the Spirit—“That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14).
- Victory over the world—“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4).
- Victory over Satan—“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6:16).
- Sanctification—“Those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18).

Think of all the problems that come when we fail to exercise faith:

- Worry—“God, I don’t think You can handle this.”
- Loneliness—God seems far away.
- Guilt—Our guilt gland is overactive because we do not trust God for cleansing. Faith is our acceptance of God’s acceptance of us.
- Disobedience—If I truly believed God’s Word, I would not violate it.

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**Catherine Marshall** - 1 JOHN 5:4 There is a difference between acceptance and resignation. Resignation is barren of faith in the love of God. It says, “Grievous circumstances have come to me. There is no escaping them.” Acceptance says, “I trust the goodwill, the love of my God. I’ll open my arms and my understanding to what He has allowed to come to me.” Thus acceptance leaves the door of hope wide open to God’s creative plan. How hard is it to accept your circumstances yet live for God anyway?

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**Charles Trumbull** - 1 John 5:4 - The secret of complete victory is faith: simply believing that Jesus has done and is doing it all. Victory is entered upon by a single act of faith, as is salvation. Victory is maintained by the attitude of faith.

But suppose the believer, having experienced the miracle of victory over sin through trusting his Lord’s sufficiency, comes, somehow, to doubt that sufficiency? At once his victory is broken, and he fails. This is possible at any moment. And at once, if there should be failure through unbelief, comes a real peril.

The lie of Satan is whispered in the ear, “You have sinned; and that proves that you never had the blessing you thought you had: you never had the Victorious Life.” This is a lie, of course, as are most of Satan’s attacks. They used to say at the Keswick conferences, “If you should fail, shout Victory!” Not with any idea of denying the reality of the failure, but in recognition of the fact that Jesus has not failed, and that there may be instantaneous and complete restoration through faith in His unimpaired sufficiency.

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**Robert Morgan - My Victory** (Borrow [365 amazing and inspiring stories about saints, martyrs & heroes page 241](#))

Rev. William Anderson of Philadelphia’s North United Presbyterian Church saw a boy dart into a grocery store. He followed him, asking, “Where do you go to Sabbath school?” Nine-year-old Robert McQuilkin replied, “Nowhere.” Anderson invited him. “And I can promise you a wonderful teacher, too,” he added. “William Parker. He has a fine class of boys.”

At age 12, Robert united with the church, saying, “When I grow up I am going to be a minister; the Lord wants me.” But as a teen, he grew dissatisfied with his Christian experience. Though active among his church’s youth, he wrestled with anxiety and doubt. On Christmas Eve, 1904, he wrote, “Have come much closer to Christ, advanced spiritually but not near enough.” He entered the University of Pennsylvania and the following summer took time to attend a missionary conference on the New Jersey coast. The speaker, Dr. Charles Trumbull, shared his testimony, admitting that there had been great fluctuations in his own spiritual life. But he had discovered that “the resources of the Christian life, my friends, are just—Jesus Christ. That is all. But that is enough.”

McQuilkin sought out Trumbull, the two talked, and on August 15, 1911, McQuilkin entered a prayer room. There came to me this impression: I am going into that room, and I do not want to come out before this matter is settled, and I have taken Christ as my

Victory for daily living.

McQuilkin knelt and consciously surrendered every sector of his life to Christ—his sins, his “doubtful things,” his doubts, his loved ones, his fiancée, his past failures, his future. When I finished, I had no special emotion, and I saw no vision. But it did seem for the first time consciously in my life that there were just two persons in the universe—my Lord and I, and nothing else mattered except the will of that other person.

For the next 40 years, the Holy Spirit flowed through McQuilkin like rivers of living water—and out of his ministry came Columbia Bible College/Columbia International University in South Carolina, today one of the great Christian and missionary training centers on earth.

Every child of God can defeat the world, and our faith is what gives us this victory. No one can defeat the world without having faith in Jesus as the Son of God. 1 John 5:4,5

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The victory lies not with us, but with Christ, who has taken on him both to conquer for us and to conquer in us. Richard Sibbes

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It is easier to walk in triumph every day when we know that the condemnation is gone and that we're free to live in victory. Bob Moorehead

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The best motivation to overcome sin is not guilt, but a greater and greater love for the Saviour. Rubye Goodlett (See my article on Expulsive Power of a New Affection)

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**Lehman Strauss** - Who are the “born of God”? They are those who have been begotten by God, who have had imparted to them by God His own nature. They are those upon whom He has conferred the disposition of “children.”

From the very moment of this regenerating experience, which commenced in faith (as far as we are concerned), there has been available to us the power necessary for victory over the world. We are not expected to fight all over again the battle that Christ has already won for us. He said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). As we commenced our new life in faith, trusting in Christ’s redeeming work, so we continue walking by faith, trusting His revealed Word. The victory we win day by day is nothing more or less than our appropriation of the victory our Lord gained once for all.

The power of this world system is not to be underestimated. Its manifold temptations are to be reckoned with. The Christian in the world is in a conflict. The word victory (Greek, *nikē*) occurs here only in the New Testament, and it speaks of the conquest that God’s children can experience day by day through faith. The opposition which causes us trouble is already overcome. He who continues to overcome, to conquer, is he who appropriates the victory already won. The shield of faith, then, is the armor that assures victory (Ephesians 6:16). It is not the mere wearing of the armor occasionally but continually, so that faith develops and grows through life’s stages and crises. The birthmark of the born-again ones is a habit of life to gain victory in the warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. To experience defeat is the exception, not the rule. The “little children” are in permanent possession of the power to overcome the world. The secret to victorious living is, first, to be born and, then, to believe. Three times in 1 John 5:4, 5 we read the phrase, “overcometh the world.” It is addressed to those who are “born of God.” The new birth gives us the potential of a new faith, which in turn makes possible new victories every day. There is no other way of overcoming the world except through the new birth and a new belief....

Our faith is in the mighty Victor who said, “... Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The simple secret to overcoming the world is to be born again and to keep on believing. The victory is possible only to those who are “born of God,” but not all who are born of God overcome the world. Some Christians have been overcome by the world. It is pitiful to see believers struggling to win a battle that has been fought and won decisively by the Lord Jesus Christ. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). (Borrow [The Epistles of John : Strauss, Lehman](#) - devotional commentary)

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**Daily Light on the Daily Path** - Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

For he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives.—“Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.—Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.—So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.—Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around

like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.—And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

James 4:7; Isa. 59:19; Matt. 4:10–11; Eph. 6:10–11; Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8–9; 1 John 5:4; Rom. 8:33

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**Gideon - Faith expressed in action.** God chooses a man to deliver His people, and the first thing He looks for is faith, faith in action. We see in verse Jdg 6:11a man doing something, however small, a man not prepared to let the enemy have what belongs to God and His people; cf. Shammah, 2 Sam. 23:11–12. He is told to 'Go in this thy might', 2Sa 23:14. **What is it that overcomes the world?** It is 'our faith', 1 John 5:4; Heb. 11:32. Gideon believes the miracles that have occurred in the nation's history, and also recognizes that their servitude is the Lord's doing, Jdg 6:13.

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**Chris Tiegreen - Invincible** (See [The One Year Heaven on Earth Devotional: 365 Daily ... - Page 143](#))

Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. 1 John 5:4

#### IN WORD

It's a beautiful promise —everyone born of God overcomes the world. But what exactly does that mean? Do we eventually become sinless, even after falling to the same sins again and again? Do we find success, even after running into the same obstacles repeatedly? Do we become immune to trials and tribulations or perhaps even no longer have to deal with them? Are we ever able to insulate ourselves from the pride and corruption of the world? What does "overcoming" look like?

You may answer those questions in a variety of ways, depending on your particular weaknesses and run-ins with the world's ways. Whatever your situation, overcoming the world can imply a lot of things: It no longer defines you; it's no longer your judge; it's no longer your dominant influence; it no longer kicks you around; you no longer listen when it tells you how meaningless or fruitless or wasted your life has been; and you no longer live by its demands. "Overcoming" means you live above the world's ways. You have a higher purpose and an otherworldly source of life. You win victories over the world's systems and aren't victimized by its trends and whims and criticisms. You are rooted in a Kingdom that overlaps with the presence of a false value system but is never subject to it. You will endure longer and live deeper than anything the world can offer you. You are born of God.

#### IN DEED

Refuse the world's mind-sets. Reject its false identities. By faith, you live in the Kingdom culture as one of its permanent citizens. By faith, you are not a victim, a mistake, or a temporary phenomenon. By faith, you are a child of the King who will win battles, tear down walls, remove obstacles, and plunder the rival kingdom. And because He is in you —because you are not left to your own resources —you cannot be defeated. Eventually, somehow, you will overcome.

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**Edward Dennett** - There are seasons when many believers feel as if they can not get into the presence, or obtain the ear of God... Surely it would prove an antidote to Satan's temptations at such times to remember, that if we cannot pray ourselves, Christ never fails to bear us up in His prevailing intercession. The effect of this truth should be to dispel our gloom and coldness of heart, because we would be led to look away from ourselves, expecting all from Him and His continual ministry for us before the throne of God.

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**Philip Brooks** - 1 John 5:4, 5 Make, then, this Incarnation the one pervading power of a man's life. Let his first feeling about this world always be, "God has been here, and so God is here still," and have you not made him strong to walk unpolluted and unscorched through the furnace of the world's most fiery corruptions? It is the low system, the constitution that is broken down and depressed in tone, that takes the contagion.... And a deep, living sense of God is the true vitality of a human soul which quenches the poisonous fires of corruption, as powerless to be hurt by it as the cold, calm sea is to be set on fire by the coals that you may cast burning into its bosom. Think of the day after Jesus had called John and Peter and Nathanael to be His servants. They had begun to hear His words of eternal life. They had become dimly conscious of so much above and beyond. Do you think it was as hard for them to pass unspotted by the places of temptation in Chorazin and Capernaum? They had tasted the powers of the world to come. And the true way, the only true way, to make any man who is a slave to this world, catching its corruption, free and pure, is to make him see another world, the supernatural world, the world of spiritual life above him and below him and stretching out before him into eternity, made visible by Christ's Incarnation.

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**J C Philpot - 1 John 5:4** - If we are to be saved our faith must gain the day; we must have a faith that shall triumph over death and hell and gain a glorious conquest over every internal and external and infernal foe. This is just the state, then, in which the matter stands: we must either conquer or be conquered; we must either gain the day and be crowned with an immortal crown of glory, or else sink in the strife, defeated by sin and Satan. But none of God's people will be defeated in the fight; and yet they often seem, as

it were, to escape defeat by the very skin of their teeth; yet faith will sooner or later gain the day, for Jesus is its finisher as well as its author. He will crown the faith of His own gift with eternal glory. He will never suffer His dear family to be overcome in the good fight of faith, for He will give strength to every weak arm and power to every feeble knee, and has engaged to bring them off more than conquerors. Thus as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to work in the soul by His living energy, He strengthens faith more and more to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, to receive more continual supplies out of His fulness, to wrestle more earnestly with God for a spiritual blessing, to stand more firmly in the evil day against every assaulting foe, to fight more strenuously the good fight of faith, and never cry quarter until faith gains its glorious end, which is to see Jesus as He is in the realms of eternal day.

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**Streams in the Desert** - "For every child of God overcomes the world: and the victorious principle which has overcome the world is our faith." (1 John 5:4.) (Weymouth.)

AT every turn in the road one can find something that will rob him of his victory and peace of mind, if he permits it. Satan is a long way from having retired from the business of deluding and ruining God's children if he can. At every milestone it is well to look carefully to the thermometer of one's experience, to see whether the temperature is well up.

Sometimes a person can, if he will, actually snatch victory from the very jaws of defeat, if he will resolutely put his faith up at just the right moment.

Faith can change any situation. No matter how dark it is, no matter what the trouble may be, a quick lifting of the heart to God in a moment of real, actual faith in Him, will alter the situation in a moment.

God is still on His throne, and He can turn defeat into victory in a second of time, if we really trust Him.

"God is mighty! He is able to deliver;  
Faith can victor be in every trying hour;  
Fear and care and sin and sorrow be defeated  
By our faith in God's almighty, conquering power.

"Have faith in God, the sun will shine,  
Though dark the clouds may be today;  
His heart has planned your path and mine,  
Have faith in God, have faith alway."

"When one has faith, one does not retire; one stops the enemy where he finds him—Marshal Foch

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**Kenneth Osbeck** - borrow [Amazing grace](#)

### **FAITH IS THE VICTORY**

John H. Yates, 1837–1900

... this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

Saving faith must always be reflected in a working faith. Our response of faith to the redemptive work of Christ transforms us; but then we need a daily motivating faith if we want to live overcoming lives. To live by faith is to believe with conviction that God's purposes for us will ultimately prevail. In fact, prevailing faith anticipates victory and celebrates in advance. For example, read the Old Testament account of how singers preceded the warriors into battle and the defeat of the enemy was accomplished (2 Chronicles 20:20–22).

Our faith does not develop merely through intellectual assent to biblical dogma or through wishful thinking. Rather, it is a lifetime commitment to the person of Christ with a response of obedience to His Word (Romans 10:17).

This hymn of faith and victory was first published in 1891 in the Christian Endeavor Hymnal. The author, John Henry Yates, was a licensed Methodist preacher who was later ordained by the Baptists. Ira Sankey, the composer, is often called the "father of the gospel song."

Encamped along the hills of light, ye Christian soldiers rise, and press the battle ere the night shall veil the glowing skies. Against the foe in vales below let all our strength be hurled; faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world.

His banner over us is love, our sword the Word of God; we tread the road the saints above with shouts of triumph trod. By faith they like a whirl-wind's breath swept on o'er ev'ry field; the faith by which they conquered death is still our shining shield.

On ev'ry hand the foe we find drawn up in dread array; let tents of ease be left behind, and onward to the

fray! Salvation's helmet on each head, with truth all girt about: The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread and echo with our shout.

To him that overcomes the foe white raiment shall be giv'n; before the angels he shall know his name confessed in heav'n. Then onward from the hills of light, our hearts with love aflame; we'll vanquish all the hosts of night in Jesus' conqu'ring name.

Chorus: Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory that overcomes the world.

For Today: Galatians 2:20; James 2:18; 1 John 5:1–12; Jude 3

Ask God to make you a vivid demonstration to your associates and friends of a triumphant faith in Christ—an exclamation of faith, not a question mark. Sing this musical truth as you go—

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### **Streams in the Desert - 1 John 5:4**

It is easy to love Him when the blue is in the sky,  
When summer winds are blowing, and we smell the roses nigh;  
There is little effort needed to obey His precious will  
When it leads through flower-decked valley, or over sun-kissed hill.

It is when the rain is falling, or the mist hangs in the air,  
When the road is dark and rugged, and the wind no longer fair,  
When the rosy dawn has settled in a shadowland of gray,  
That we find it hard to trust Him, and are slower to obey.

It is easy to trust Him when the singing birds have come,  
And their canticles are echoed in our heart and in our home;  
But 'tis when we miss the music, and the days are dull and drear,  
That we need a faith triumphant over every doubt and fear.

And our blessed Lord will give it; what we lack He will supply;  
Let us ask in faith believing—on His promises rely;  
He will ever be our Leader, whether smooth or rough the way,  
And will prove Himself sufficient for the needs of every day.

To trust in spite of the look of being forsaken; to keep crying out into the vast, whence comes no returning voice, and where seems no hearing; to see the machinery of the world pauselessly grinding on as if self-moved, caring for no life, nor shifting a hair-breadth for all entreaty, and yet believe that God is awake and utterly loving; to desire nothing but what comes meant for us from His hand; to wait patiently, ready to die of hunger, fearing only lest faith should fail—such is the victory that overcometh the world, such is faith indeed.—George MacDonald

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### **Max Lucado - Doing What's Right 1 JOHN 5:4**

You get impatient with your own life, trying to master a habit or control a sin—and in your frustration begin to wonder where the power of God is. Be patient. God is using today's difficulties to strengthen you for tomorrow. He is equipping you. The God who makes things grow will help you bear fruit.

Dwell on the fact that God lives within you. Think about the power that gives you life. The realization that God is dwelling within you may change the places you want to go and the things you want to do today.

Do what is right this week, whatever it is, whatever comes down the path, whatever problems and dilemmas you face—just do what's right. Maybe no one else is doing what's right, but you do what's right. You be honest. You take a stand. You be true. After all, regardless of what you do, God does what is right: he saves you with his grace. (See [God's Inspirational Promises: A Guide to Living - Page 170](#))

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### **[A THREEFOLD ENEMY BY THEODORE EPP](#)**

Romans 6:6-18

The Bible teaches that the Christian's enemy is a threefold one: the flesh, the world and the Devil.

The flesh is the old self life, the fallen nature in each one of us. The world is the world of mankind around us that is alienated from God and opposed to His rulership. The Devil, or Satan, includes also the fallen angels whom he controls.

The basis for our victory over this threefold enemy has already been laid for us in Christ.

With regard to the flesh, we read in Romans 6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (vv. 6,7).

With regard to the world, we read in Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This is why the Lord could tell us in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Further light is thrown on this subject in 1 John 5:4,5: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

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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](#))

## THE OVERCOMING LIFE

**D L Moody** in his booklet the Overcoming Life introduces this subject - [CLICK HERE FOR FULL DISCUSSION](#)

I would like to have you open your Bible at the first epistle of John, fifth chapter, fourth and fifth verses: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

When a battle is fought, all are anxious to know who are the victors. In these verses we are told who is to gain the victory in life. When I was converted I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my

grasp. I thought that old things had passed away, that all things had become new; that my old corrupt nature, the Adam life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army, that there was a battle on hand, and that if I was to get a crown, I had to work for it and fight for it.

Salvation is a gift, as free as the air we breathe. It is to be obtained, like any other gift, without money and without price: there are no other terms. "To him that worketh not, but believeth." But on the other hand, if we are to gain a crown, we must work for it. Let me quote a few verses in First Corinthians: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire: and the fire itself shall prove each man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide, which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."

We see clearly from this that we may be saved, but all our works burned up. I may have a wretched, miserable voyage through life, with no victory, and no reward at the end; saved, yet so as by fire, or as Job puts it, "with the skin of my teeth." I believe that a great many men will barely get to heaven as Lot got out of Sodom, burned out, nothing left, works and everything else destroyed.

It is like this: when a man enters the army, he is a member of the army the moment he enlists; he is just as much a member as a man who has been in the army ten or twenty years. But enlisting is one thing, and participating in a battle another. Young converts are like those just enlisted.

It is folly for any man to attempt to fight in his own strength. The world, the flesh and the devil are too much for any man. But if we are linked to Christ by faith, and He is formed in us the hope of glory, then we shall get the victory over every enemy. It is believers who are the overcomers. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Through Him we shall be more than conquerors.

I wouldn't think of talking to unconverted men about overcoming the world, for it is utterly impossible. They might as well try to cut down the American forest with their penknives. But a good many Christian people make this mistake: they think the battle is already fought and won. They have an idea that all they have to do is to put the oars down in the bottom of the boat, and the current will drift them into the ocean of God's eternal love. But we have to cross the current. We have to learn how to watch and fight, and how to overcome. The battle is only just commenced. The Christian life is a conflict and a warfare, and the quicker we find it out the better. There is not a blessing in this world that God has not linked Himself to. All the great and higher blessings God associates with Himself. When God and man work together, then it is that there is going to be victory. We are co-workers with Him. You might take a mill, and put it forty feet above a river, and there isn't capital enough in the States to make that river turn the mill; but get it down about forty feet, and away it works. We want to keep in mind that if we are going to overcome the world, we have got to work with God. It is His power that makes all the means of grace effectual.

The story is told that Frederick Douglas, the great slave orator, once said in a mournful speech when things looked dark for his race:—

"The white man is against us, governments are against us, the spirit of the times is against us. I see no hope for the colored race. I am full of sadness."

Just then a poor old colored woman rose in the audience, and said.—

"Frederick, is God dead?"

My friend, it makes a difference when you count God in.

Now many a young believer is discouraged and disheartened when he realizes this warfare. He begins to think that God has forsaken him, that Christianity is not all that it professes to be. But he should rather regard it as an encouraging sign. No sooner has a soul escaped from his snare than the great Adversary takes steps to ensnare it again. He puts forth all his power to recapture his lost prey. The fiercest attacks are made on the strongest forts, and the fiercer the battle the young believer is called on to wage, the surer evidence it is of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. God will not desert him in his time of need, any more than He deserted His people of old when they were hard pressed by their foes.

## SERMON NOTES

### C H SPURGEON

world, even our faith.”

What is meant by this world?

The power of sin all around us: the influence which operates towards evil, and makes the commandments and purposes of God grievous to society. The Prince of this world has much to do with this evil power.

This world is our foe, and we must fight with it.

We must contend till we overcome the world, or it will overcome us.

I. THE CONQUEST ITSELF: “overcometh the world.”

We are not to be litigious, eager to contradict everybody.

We are not, however, to be cowardly, and anxious to flee the fight.

We mingle among men of the world, but it must be as warriors who are ever on the watch, and are aiming at victory. Therefore—

1. We break loose from the world’s customs.
2. We maintain our freedom to obey a higher Master in all things.

We are not enslaved by dread of poverty, greed of riches, official command, personal ambition, love of honour, fear of shame, or force of numbers.

3. We are raised above circumstances, and find our happiness in invisible things: thus we overcome the world.

4. We are above the world’s authority. Its ancient customs or novel edicts are for its own children: we do not own it as a ruler, or as a judge.

5. We are above its example, influence, and spirit. We are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to us.

6. We are above its religion. We gather our religion from God and his Word, not from human sources.

As one in whom this conquest was seen, read the story of Abraham. Think of him in connection with his quitting home, his lonely wanderings, his conduct towards Lot, Sodom and her king, Isaac, etc.

II. THE CONQUERING NATURE.—“Whatsoever is born of God.”

1. This nature alone will undertake the contest with the world.

2. This nature alone can continue it. All else wearies in the fray.

3. This nature is born to conquer. God is the Lord, and that which is born of him is royal and ruling.

It is not an amendment of the former creation.

It is not even a new creation without relationship to its Creator; but it is a birth from God, with eminence of descent, infusing similarity of nature, and conferring rights of heirship.

The Creator cannot be overcome, nor those born of him.

Jesus, the firstborn, never was defeated, nor will those conformed to him fail of ultimate triumph.

The Holy Spirit in us must be victorious, for how should he be vanquished? The idea would be blasphemous.

III. THE CONQUERING WEAPON: “even our faith.”

We are enabled to be conquerors through regarding—

1. The unseen reward which awaits us.
2. The unseen presence which surrounds us. God and a cloud of witnesses hold us in full survey.
3. The mystic union to Christ which grace has wrought in us. Resting in Jesus we overcome the world.
4. The sanctifying communion which we enjoy with the unseen God.

In these ways faith operates towards overcoming sin.

IV. THE SPECIALITY OF IT—“This is the victory.”

1. For salvation, finding the rest of faith.
2. For imitation, finding the wisdom of Jesus, the Son of God.
3. For consolation, seeing victory secured to us in Jesus.

Behold your conflict—born to battle.

Behold your triumph—bound to conquer.

WAR-CRIES

When a traveller was asked whether he did not admire the admirable structure of some stately building, “No,” said he, “for I have been at Rome, where better are to be seen every day.” O believer, if the world tempt thee with its rare sights and curious prospects, thou mayst well scorn them, having been, by contemplation, in heaven, and being able, by faith, to see infinitely better delights every hour of the day! “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Feathers for Arrows.

The danger to which Christians are exposed from the influence of the visible course of things, or the world (as it is called in

Scripture), is a principal subject of St. John's General Epistle. He seems to speak of the world as some False Prophet, promising what it cannot fulfil, and gaining credit by its confident tone. Viewing it as resisting Christianity, he calls it the "Spirit of Antichrist," the parent of a numerous progeny of evil, false spirits like itself, the teachers of all lying doctrines, by which the multitude of men are led captive. The antagonist of this great tempter is the Spirit of Truth, which is "greater than he that is in the world"; its victorious antagonist, because gifted with those piercing Eyes of Faith which are able to scan the world's shallowness, and to see through the mists of error into the glorious kingdom of God beyond them. "This is the victory that overcometh the world," says the text, "even our faith."—J. H. Newman.

The believer not only overcomes the world in its deformities, but in its seeming excellences. Not in the way that Alexander and other conquerors overcame it, but in a much nobler way; for they, so far from overcoming the world, were slaves to the world. The man who puts ten thousand other men to death does not overcome the world. The true conqueror is he who can say with Paul, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? etc." "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Such an one has recourse, by faith, to an infallible standard—the Word of God: indeed, there is no other. He detects the world, and will not be imposed upon by it. When he is tempted to take the world's good things as his portion, he rejects them; because he has something better in hand. Thus, faith in Christ overcometh the corrupt influence, the inordinate love, the slavish fear, the idolatry, the friendship, the false wisdom, and the maxims of the world: it overcometh not only the folly, but the very religion of the world, as far as it is a false religion. The Christian has hold of a superior influence, and engages superior strength. Doubtless, says he, I have great enemies to attack but greater is he that is with me than he that is in the world.

Richard Cecil.

It is asserted of this elegant creature (the Bird of Paradise) that it always flies against the wind; as, otherwise, its beautiful but delicate plumage would be ruffled and spoiled. Those only are Birds of Paradise, in a spiritual sense, who make good their way against the wind of worldliness; a wind always blowing in an opposite direction to that of heaven.—J. D. Hull.

Believers, forget it not! you are the soldiers of the Overcomer. J. H. Evans.

## 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."

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### **The Victorious Life - Archie Edwards**

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." 1 John 5:4, 5

St. John here presents the victorious life in four aspects:

- I. In Its Origin. "... Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world" (ASV).
- II. In Its Conflict. Our text speaks of overcoming, and overcoming is suggestive of struggle.
- III. In Its Conquest. "... Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world"
- IV. In the Secret of Its Power. "... This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (ASV). Note:
  - A. The nature of this faith—"he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

- B. The object of this faith:
1. Faith in Jesus as truly human.
  2. Faith in Jesus as essentially divine.
  3. The exclusiveness of this faith as the means of victory over the world.

## **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).**

## Victory over the World James Hastings

And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.—1 John 5:4.

1. These words occur in a letter written by St. John to all the different Christian communities in the cities and towns of the Empire. These little churches or congregations consisted of men and women of humble position, little or no wealth, not much learning, not much influence, and they were found in cities given up for the most part to modes of life wholly incompatible with Christianity. The little Christian communities had gone through the severest persecutions. Hundreds and thousands of Christians had been put to death for refusal to worship the Roman Emperor; they were condemned as disloyal subjects, as atheists—because they had no image of their God—as secret conspirators. The power of Rome was irresistible. They were surrounded with a society which tolerated evils and vices which would shock them, and on which at present they had made little or no impression. There was wild extravagance of luxury, and abject poverty and starvation side by side, with no poor law, no hospitals, and but very slender private charities. There was a cruelty towards slaves and children which was so common that it had ceased to shock people. There were vices which cannot be named, against which Christians set their faces like flint. This was the world that St. John saw, and these were the little communities to whom he wrote. And what he said was: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Is it not an amazing, a sublime audacity, to say that the faith of these little insignificant churches was overcoming this great powerful world of Roman armies, pagan vices, and heathen cruelties and superstitions? Yet this is what St. John says: "Our faith is overcoming this world."

2. Of all the Apostles there was none that dwelt so constantly on "overcoming" as St. John. One can see that the idea of battle and triumph runs through his Epistles, as well as through the Book of Revelation. It is he that speaks of "overcoming the wicked one"; it is he that records those glorious promises which we find in the Epistles to the Seven Churches, promises that belong to the overcoming one. In all these references we have the thought of a victorious power overcoming a mighty, perpetual, opposing force. And yet, what is St. John's ideal of the Christian life? Is it one of feverish excitement and strain? No, it is the very opposite of this. He more than all the disciples had learned the secret of the rest of faith; he knew what it was to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He it was that learned the meaning of the paradox that the secret of all real activity is stillness of soul, and that the condition of continuous victory is an attitude of repose on the power of God. Well, that teaches us that the man who knows most about victorious conflict is not the man of restless energy and intense human activity, but the man who realizes his own weakness and knows fully what it is to rest in Divine omnipotence. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

### I The World that Challenges the Believer

1. What is the world? The term rendered "world" means properly "arrangement"; and is then applied to the universe of created things in its orderly and systematic conformation, as opposed to the confusion of the original chaos. In all this, however, the idea is rather that of God's handiwork than of God's antagonist: in this sense, the world is not God's enemy, but God's witness. The term passed, however, in the hands of the inspired writers, into a designation of things visible and temporal, the state of things that now is, and the persons who have their treasure, their home, and their all, in it, as opposed to things spiritual and eternal, the state of things that

shall be, and the persons who belong, even in this life, as to their home and higher being, to that Heaven in which God dwells. The world thus became a brief title for all that is not God nor of God, all that is earthly, sensual, and evil, all that tempts to sin, and all those who live without God, apart from God, or in enmity against God.

In the Apostle's time, the world meant, no doubt, the whole mass of human society, with the exception of the handfuls here and there of those who had embraced the Christian faith. The line of separation between the Christian and the non-Christian elements of society could be readily and sharply drawn. But it is not so now. The Church has leavened the world; the world has leavened the Church. The non-Christian element of society is no longer a distinct and definable aggregation of men. The world exists, but it is, so to speak, no longer visible and separable. Its existence is as real, but its form is vaguer. It is the sum of the many forces, principles, and tendencies which oppose and counteract the progress of the spirit and the spiritual. It exists not only among us, but in us. It is all that part of each one of us which gives a more or less active resistance to growth in goodness, in knowledge, and in sympathy; the sum of the influences of fashion, and prejudice, and selfishness: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."<sup>1</sup> [Note: Memorials of Edwin Hatch, 4.]

The world of the nineteenth century is very different indeed from that of the first. There is no Nero or Domitian now on the world's throne; there is no Coliseum with its hungry lions, and with its hungrier, crueller crowd of brutes in human form, to gloat over the sufferings of their innocent victims. The fight of faith is in another region, perhaps a harder one for us, for it was not of a lesser but of a greater conflict that the Apostle spoke when he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The wrestling of the nineteenth century has been of that high and difficult kind; the great foe has been Materialism, uttering itself in sceptical thought on the one hand, and in selfish luxury on the other. The world which is faith's antagonist has laid aside in our day its bludgeons, and all its apparatus of torture and intimidation, and has taken up instead flute, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music to soothe conscience and to allure along the flowery paths of inglorious ease to sunless gulfs of ignominious death. And it is unutterably sad to think what multitudes allow their faith to lose all its fibre, and permit the aspirations and enthusiasm of youth to die down into the dullest commonplace, till they find satisfaction enough for their immortal spirits in coining their hearts, and dropping their blood for drachmas. Not the ferocious dragon of the Revelation, but the insidious Mammon installed in our time as the prince of the power of the air, and his wiles are as much to be dreaded as the ferocity of the beast.<sup>1</sup> [Note: J. Munro Gibson.]

This is the world of which Carlyle said, "Understand it, despise it, loathe it; but cheerfully hold on thy way through it with thine eye on the highest loadstars." This is the world of which Horace Walpole wrote, "It is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." This is the world of which Wordsworth wrote:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

2. This world is a gigantic power, not easily resisted. It is not a thing of yesterday: it is a tradition of many ages, of many civilizations, which, after flowing on in the great current of human history, has come down, charged with the force of an accumulated prestige, even to us. To this great tradition of regulated ungodliness each generation adds something; something of force, something of refinement, something of social or intellectual power. The world is Protean in its capacity for taking new forms. Sometimes it is a gross idol-worship; sometimes it is a military empire; sometimes it is a cynical school of philosophers; sometimes it is the indifference of a blasé society, which agrees in nothing but in proscribing earnestness. The Church conquered it in the form of the pagan empire. But the world had indeed had its revenge when it could point to such Popes as were Julius ii., or Alexander vi., or Leo x.; to such courts as were those of Louis xiv. or Charles ii.; for it had throned itself at the heart of the victorious Church. So now between the world and Christendom there is no hard and fast line of demarcation. The world is within the fold, within the sanctuary, within the heart, as well as without. It sweeps round each soul like a torrent of hot air, and makes itself felt at every pore of the moral system. Not that the world is merely a point of view, a mood of thought, a temper or frame of mind, having no actual, or, as we should say, no objective existence. It has an independent existence. Just as the Kingdom of God exists whether we belong to it or no, and yet, if we do belong to it, is, as our Lord has told us, within us as an atmosphere of moral power and light; so the world, the kingdom of another being, exists, whether we belong to it or no, although our belonging to it is a matter of inward motives and character. The world penetrates like a subtle atmosphere in Christendom, while in heathendom it is organized as a visible system. But it is the same thing at bottom. It is the essential spirit of corrupt human life, taking no serious account of God, either forgetting Him altogether, or putting something in His place, or striking a balance between His claims and those of His antagonists. And thus friendship with it is "enmity with God," who will have our all. And a first duty in His servants is to free themselves from its power, or, as St. John says, to overcome it.

(1) Sometimes the world brings its power to bear on us by direct assault. In the first ages of the Church, when it was confessedly pagan, it made great use of this instrument for enforcing its supremacy. It imprisoned and killed Christians from the days of Nero to

the days of Diocletian. It persecuted by social exclusiveness, by inflicting loss of property and position, by bodily tortures and by death. The mildest forms of persecution are all, thank God, that are now possible in this country, but if a man be deprived of advantages which he would otherwise have enjoyed, if he be met by a cold bow or a vacant gaze where he expects a cordial greeting, if he feels, in short, that he is under a social ban, and all this because he has dared to obey his conscience where obedience has been unwelcome or unpopular, he is, to all intents and purposes, persecuted. And if he can stand this persecution patiently, calmly, silently, so much the better for him. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness, sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But how is he to stand it? By "seeing him who is invisible." Who that has had to undergo a painful operation does not know the support that is derived from holding the hand of a friend who stands by, full of love and sympathy, till all is over? And faith links the hands of the persecuted with the very hand of Christ. "Fear not," He says, "for I am with thee. I have called thee by my name: thou art mine." And it is thus that the world, when it has done its very worst, is vanquished.

(2) The world assails us by offers of compromise, by appealing to our interests, our desires, our passions. It seeks to throw its spell over us. As music charms the ear, so do the world's honours, applause and popularity the hearts of many. Over some they exercise an irresistible sway. Over all they are mighty. There are few who can bear, without a sense of pain, the turning away from them of the world's favour. It may be regarded as a test of the strength and sincerity of one's religion, that one can bear without wincing the frown or scorn of the world. It requires more than human strength to contend against and overcome that for which we have a warm desire. But the more we delight in the favour and approval of God, the less will we care for that of the world. The approbation of God and our own consciences is a better support than all the smiles the world can bestow.

(3) The world seizes the opportunity of attacking us when we are worn out by manifold cares and duties and troubles. Its influence is continuous and persistent. It seeks to absorb us. How many notable housewives, busy from morning to night with their household affairs, their children, their servants, could tell us that they scarce can find a minute to read the Bible, or to stop and think where they are going; and that at morning they are so anxious to get to the avocations of the day, and at evening so completely wearied and worn out, that they have not time or heart for prayer! How many a toiling, anxious man, working and scheming to make ends meet, and to maintain his children, and to advance them in life, has not a thought to spare for the other world—for his own soul's eternal destiny, or for the eternal destiny of those he holds dear! It is when we are "careful and troubled about many things," that we are ready to forget that "one thing is needful."

The world overcomes us, not merely by appealing to our reason, or by exciting our passions, but by imposing on our imagination. So much do the systems of men swerve from the truth as set forth in Scripture that their very presence becomes a standing fact against Scripture, even when our reason condemns them, by their persevering assertions, and they gradually overcome those who set out by contradicting them. In all cases, what is often and unhesitatingly asserted at length finds credit with the mass of mankind; and so it happens, in this instance, that, admitting as we do from the first that the world is one of our three chief enemies; maintaining, rather than merely granting, that the outward face of things speaks a different language from the word of God; yet, when we come to act in the world, we find this very thing a trial, not merely of our obedience, but even of our faith; that is, the mere fact that the world turns out to be what we began by actually confessing concerning it.<sup>1</sup> [Note: J. H. Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 122.]

One of the severest trials of Gladstone's life was the assassination of his trusted lieutenant and most intimate personal friend, Lord Frederick Cavendish. And it is pathetic to be told that in the stress of duty and responsibility following on this tragedy he referred sadly to the impossibility of dwelling on his loss as one of the penalties of his position. But think of the faith that could so rise superior to a gnawing grief as to be in no wise unfitted by it for the closest thought and most assiduous application. It is an illustration of the restful side of his faith.<sup>2</sup> [Note: J. Munro Gibson.]

3. If the world is not being overcome by us, then we are being overcome by the world. It is like a stream. We are either going up against the stream, or we are being carried down by the current. When is it that the world is conquering us? When we are induced to accept its views, its maxims, instead of the principles of God's holy word; when we are influenced by the opinion of men and by the spirit of the age. The world is conquering us when it is petrifying all our desires after God, when it chills all our aspirations upward, and when it steals out of our hearts the very inclination to pray to God and to listen to His voice. The world is overcoming us when it fills us with the fear of man, so that we are afraid to speak for Christ, and are dumb. The world is conquering us when it fills us with love of earthly things, and leads us to set our affections upon things below.

This is the victory wherewith the world overcomes us, even our doubt. The world has a principle, a bond of union, a faith; and the world must conquer us if we have none. It is necessary that we should keep hold of this truth, which we have, it would seem, almost forgotten, that faith is meant to defend us, not to be defended, to be an active principle within us, not the dead body round which the battle rages. Faith and religion ought to be our weapons of warfare, the instruments by which we are to do our duty. But how far will our present faith answer to this definition? "A man's religion consists not," as Carlyle has said, "of the many things he is in doubt of, and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of, and has no need of effort for believing."<sup>3</sup> [Note: A. T. Lyttelton, in Keble College

The world, which he defined as “the activities of this life with God left out,” seemed to him to invade everything in London, even the Church, tempting some of the clergy to aim at success and popularity, and become absorbed in efforts to gather large congregations around them by competing in attractions with neighbouring churches.

“We have moved to London House till Easter. It makes my work easier for me, as I have not so much travelling. It also brings me more visitors and makes me feel more in the world. But oh! how much world there is! The devil and the flesh are not nearly so dangerous combined. The trial of a bishop is that he is always engaged in outside matters. I really rejoice in Confirmations, which bring me into contact with the young. I do not find so many human beings in London as there were at Peterborough.”

“I am perpetually overwhelmed with work. I have to express more opinions than I have time to verify. I am in the very centre of all that is worldly. I am exposed to all the most deteriorating influences. All that I can do is to realize these facts, and try to possess my soul as well as I can.”<sup>1</sup> [Note: Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton, ii. 224.]

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,  
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—  
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
As old and new at once as nature's self,  
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,  
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—  
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.  
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—  
This good God,—what He could do, if He would.  
Would, if He could—then must have done long since:  
If so, when, where and how? some way must be,—  
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit  
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.  
Why not, “The Way, the Truth, the Life”?  
2 [Note: Browning, Bishop Blougram's Apology.]

## II The Faith that Conquers the World

1. Faith is not a new faculty conferred upon the soul, but the quickening and expansion of a faculty that we already possess. Cold iron is precisely identical with iron heated in the fire; but though the metal is the same, the fire that has entered into it entirely transforms its condition, and endows it with a new power. And the fire also, by entering the iron, takes upon itself new action, making of the metal a vehicle of its dynamic potency. So does the Spirit of God take and transfuse and transform our ordinary faculties for His own great ends.

Thus faith is the conquering principle in religion. For Christian faith is not a thing apart from one's ordinary human nature and imposed upon it from without; it is the expansion of an original inherent moral quality, common to us all; it is the spiritualization of a natural faculty; it is the daily energizing, vitalizing power in which we live and do our best work, brought into contact with the Divine power. So glorified, it overcomes the world—the worldly spirit with its carnal aims, countless temptations, and unholy methods, being the hardest there is to overcome. But even unglorified, it has this overcoming power, and if we only come to see this clearly, we shall not find so much difficulty in transferring to the life of religion a quality which we have learnt to regard as the supreme essential in every secular sphere.

Without belonging to any religious communion, Renan has his full share of religious feeling. Though he himself does not believe, he is infinitely apt at seizing all the delicate shades of the popular creeds. I may perhaps be understood when I say that faith does not possess him, but that he possesses faith.<sup>1</sup> [Note: Anatole France, On Life and Letters, 284.]

2. The virtue of faith lies in its object. Faith is in itself nothing better than an organ, an instrument; and it derives its character entirely from that upon which it is fixed. The adorable majesty of God, His omnipotence, holiness, and love, His nature, so far as it has been revealed to us, the union of perfect God and perfect Man in the person of Jesus, the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction offered by Him for the sins of the whole world, the free and gracious offers of pardon which are made in Him, His

mediatorial sovereignty over the world, the secret and mysterious workings of God the Holy Ghost—these are the objects proposed to faith, upon which, if we fix the eye of the soul, we shall assuredly have power to overcome the world in the strength of that Divine vision. And in all this there is one central figure, even the Son of God made very Man, nailed to the Cross, pouring forth His precious blood for our sakes and in our stead, and then in triumph risen, exalted, crowned, sitting on the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.

The Power is all in Christ. Faith is the link that binds us to Him. Is there any power in faith? None whatever. Is there any power in a railway coupling? No; but look at these carriages, look at that train, look at that locomotive. Where is the power? You see it moving along, and you say, "All the power is in the locomotive." Well, how do these carriages manage to get along if it is all there? You say: "There is a coupling, a link, a very simple thing." There is no power in the coupling, but it links the power in the locomotive with the carriages, and if you break the link, all the power is gone.<sup>1</sup> [Note: E. Hopkins, in *The Keswick Week*, 1900, p. 27.]

People say, "Lord, increase our faith." Did not the Lord rebuke His disciples for that prayer? He said, "You do not want a great faith, but faith in a great God. If your faith were as small as a grain of mustard-seed, it would suffice to remove this mountain!"<sup>2</sup> [Note: Hudson Taylor.]

3. The faith that conquers is a personal force or power in the soul. Not only does the truth conquer all that is false; not only does union with our invincible head make our victory sure; but we also conquer in the exercise of a personal faith, sustaining us in all the conflicts in which we engage. Such was the faith of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and all the host of worthies whose names and deeds illustrate the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was by faith that "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." It was by faith that "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." It was by faith that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It was by faith that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Faith made men strong, courageous, and capable of daring exploits. Through faith common men subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword. By faith Joseph exercised self-restraint, regarded sin as an offence to God, and said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" By faith men still overcome temptations, endure cruel mockings and scourgings, bear privations and tortures, discharge duties, lay aside besetting sins, achieve the mastery over themselves and all their enemies.

Faith is not the mere sum of probabilities, conjecture, or reasonings of any kind.... It implies the action of the affections and of the will, the exercise of all those inner powers of our being which the Hebrews called "the Heart."<sup>1</sup> [Note: Edward King, 120.]

Often enough our faith beforehand in an uncertified result is the only thing that makes the result come true. Suppose, for instance, that you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of maybes, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss.<sup>2</sup> [Note: W. James, *The Will to Believe*, 59.]

Yet over sorrow and over death  
Cometh at last a song that saith—  
"This, this is the victory,  
Even our faith."  
Love maketh all the crooked straight,  
And love bringeth love to all that wait,  
And laughter and light and dewy tear  
To the hard, blind eyes of Fate.  
All shall look tenderly yet and free  
Outside over the lea,  
And deep within the heart of me.

4. The Apostle speaks of the victory in the past tense, as if it were already accomplished. Our Lord Himself exclaimed, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." These words were uttered by Him in the Upper Room in that hour when the burden of a great mystery rested upon Him, when He stood beneath the chilling shadow of the Cross itself before He descended into the valley of the Kidron, and crossing the brook, entered into Gethsemane, there amid the shadows of the Garden to pray more and more earnestly. Thus, before the conflict had as yet reached a deadly heat, the note of victory was sounded. This was the joyous anticipation of One who knew that virtually the conflict was now over. That fact was the inspiring

assurance which He gave to His disciples. They, too, would have very similar tribulations, though not in the same degree, but those troubles would not necessarily mean defeat to them. He had conquered the world, why need they therefore be dispirited? The fact that He had conquered was the pledge of their final victory if they were His. He had supplied the great precedent. The world henceforth would be a conquered world. It would to the end of time have to acknowledge one total defeat at least. Christ, moreover, identified Himself with His followers, so that His conquering power should be also manifested in them.

5. The text does not say that faith is the means by which the world is overcome. It does not say that by faith the battle is fought and the victory is gained. It says that faith is the victory itself. It does not bid us marshal our forces against the world. It does not command us to contend with this or that evil. It does not require us to array on one side faith and on the other the world, and assure us that when the weary fight is done, through blood and toil and bitter contest, the latter shall be overcome. It draws us up into a higher plane. It leaves the world far below. It lets it move on for the time unheeded. It does not care for its hurried rush, its shout of defiance, its cry of victory. It places before the soul the eternal realities—heaven and hell, life and death, the power of the sacraments, the influence of prayer, the ministrations of the angels, the watchful love of an overruling Providence, and, above them all and in them all, the Incarnate Saviour uniting man and human nature to the Eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three in One and One in Three.

The one victory over the world is to bend it to serve me in the highest things—the attainment of a clearer vision of the Divine nature, the attainment of a deeper love to God Himself, and of a more glad consecration and service to Him. That is the victory—when you can make the world a ladder to lift you to God. That is its right use, that is victory, when all its tempting voices do not draw you away from listening to the Supreme Voice that bids you keep His commandments. When the world comes between you and God as an obscuring screen, it has conquered you. When the world comes between you and God as a transparent medium, you have conquered it. To win victory is to get it beneath your feet and stand upon it, and reach up thereby to God.<sup>1</sup> [Note: A. Maclaren.]

One of our famous philosophers tells of an Italian who was placed upon the rack to secure a confession, and who bore the agony with courage by crying out continually: "I see it, I see it." What did he see? The victim explained afterwards that he had conjured up the dire punishment that awaited him if he revealed his secret. He used the thought and vision of the scaffold to turn his mind away from the consciousness of present pain. So by looking at things which are not seen, men and women have borne the greatest hardships, and triumphed over the fiercest foes. And if it be the case that fear can in a measure expel the sense of pain and make torture tolerable, what will the passion of a great and thrilling love not do? Faith is the link that brings our love into contact with the Eternal Love, that puts us alongside the infinite resources of God. It is

The desire of the moth for the star  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow.

(1) Faith has been conquering the world of ignorance and error by the promulgation of truth, which is the law of the intellectual life. There is now a lessening tendency to acquiesce in what is false, a growing tendency to find out what is true. Men are beginning to regard facts rather than opinions, the things that are rather than the things that are imagined. New tracks are being opened up, and every step of the old tracks is being resurveyed. This spirit of investigation is the spirit of Christianity. There are, no doubt, unbelievers in the manifoldness of the works and ways of God, who take every discovery as a fresh rebuff, who would put chains upon the feet of every traveller into the domain of science or of history, lest his report of what is to be found there should be different from their own or other men's dreams. But the number of such timorous doubters is lessening; the number of believers in truth is increasing.

When Dr. Lazeer, in Cuba, made up his mind by experiment that yellow fever was propagated solely through the bite of a mosquito, and gave his life in supreme testimony to this truth, the world not only added one more undying name to her roll of heroes, but began forthwith to act upon the new knowledge sanctified by this sacred test.<sup>1</sup> [Note: D. Scudder, *The Passion for Reality*, 45.]

What thou of God and of thyself dost know,  
So know that none can force thee to forego;  
For oh! his knowledge is a worthless art,  
Which, forming of himself no vital part,  
The foremost man he meets with readier skill  
In sleight of words, can rob him of at will.  
Faith feels not for her lore more sure nor less,  
If all the world deny it or confess:  
Did the whole world exclaim, "Like Solomon,

Thou sittest high on Wisdom's noblest throne,"  
She would not, than before, be surer then,  
Nor draw more courage from the assent of men.  
Or did the whole world cry, "O fond and vain!  
What idle dream is this which haunts thy brain?"  
To the whole world Faith boldly would reply,  
"The whole world can, but I can never, lie."

[Note: R. C. Trench, Poems, 315.]

(2) Faith has been conquering the world of selfishness, by erecting the republic of unselfishness, by spreading the spirit of love, which is the law of social life. There is a greater desire now to relieve the burdens of the afflicted and the poor, an increasing effort to reform the criminal, a growing admission of the possible variety of human beliefs, a lessening disposition to settle all international disputes by the terrible decision of war, a growth of the mutual respect which is the parent of liberty—for the mutual respect of each for each means the common liberty of all. The growth of this is a growth of Christian influence, and of the Christian temper: it is a victory of "our faith," for it is the victory of Christian love.

Alexander the Great, when he was master of the whole world, was the greatest slave within it, for he was discontented even with his victories; the pride of conquest held him in captivity by its iron chain. No; he who aims at the highest greatness in this world may only be more greatly selfish than the rest of mankind, and what is that but to be really little? He is truly great who is the most unselfish, and he is the least of all who lives for himself alone.<sup>1</sup> [Note: C. H. Spurgeon.]

In the Patriarchate of Antioch there is a marvellous memorial to the victory of Christianity. In the centre of it, in a mountain region not far from Antioch, are to be found the ruins of one hundred and fifty cities within a space of thirty or forty leagues. In the most glorious days of Christianity, when it ruled the Roman world, these Christian cities were invaded by either the Persians or the Saracens, and, as the story goes, forsaken by their inhabitants in a single night. Twelve hundred years have passed away since then, and, in spite of time and earthquake and the burning Syrian sun, the traveller who visits them scarce dares to call them ruins. Not as thoroughly preserved, indeed, as Pompeii or Herculaneum, they still tell the story of Christian civilization in the days when the Church had recently won its victory over persecution and tyranny. The signs of comfort and of peace appear on all sides. Bath-houses and stables, balconies and shaded porticoes, winepresses, and even jars for preserving wine, yet remain. Still are to be seen magnificent churches, supported by columns, flanked by towers, surrounded by splendid tombs. Crosses and monograms of Christ are sculptured on most of the doors, and numerous inscriptions may be read upon the monuments. He who has visited Pompeii, with its sad record of the refinement and corruption of Rome, cannot fail to notice the difference, as he reads written over the door of a house, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth for evermore"; and on another, "Lord, succour this house and them that dwell therein"; or on a tomb where the dead are sleeping, "Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge; no evil shall approach thee, no plague come nigh thy dwelling."

But what is most observable is the tone of triumph and victory that the inscriptions seem to breathe. On the porch of a house is written, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and a sepulchral monument records the triumphant sentence, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Even an obscure painter who, while engaged in decorating a tomb, tried, it would seem, his chisel on the wall of rock, as he rudely traced a monogram of Christ, in his enthusiasm as a liberated Christian, carved in the stone to remain for ages, "This conquers."<sup>2</sup> [Note: J. de Koven.]

"I do not know," Mazzini says, "speaking historically, a single great conquest of the human spirit, a single important step for the perfecting of human society, which has not had its roots in a strong religious faith."<sup>3</sup> [Note: Bolton King, Mazzini, 223.]

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