



“... And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.”

## *What to do when you just don't feel like an overcomer!*

### **Main verses:**

<sup>3</sup> In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:3-5)

### **Main Point:**

Do you feel like an overcomer?  
Some days you probably do. But on other days, or in difficult seasons, it can be hard to accept John's words "everyone born of God overcomes the world."

What does John mean when he calls us 'overcomers'?  
And what do you do when you just don't feel like you're doing much overcoming?

### **Intro |**

Today I'm going to preach a message that I need to hear.

You'd be surprised how often us preachers need to listen to our own sermons!

As I read and pondered the opening verses of chapter 5, I felt like saying to John 'Ah, John are you sure about that?'

Let's read them again. I'll pick it up at verse 3:

<sup>3</sup> In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:3-5)

In these three verses, I have areas that I'd like to discuss – that's a nice way of saying 'arguing' – with John.

Let's take it verse by verse:

**"This is love for God: to keep his commands."**

In other words, this is how we show that we love God, by giving attention, giving God's word priority in our lives, and honouring and obeying the commands God the Father and Jesus has given to us. We do this as our loving response to the love that God has shown towards us.

And then John says, **"And his commands are not burdensome."**

Hmm ... on good days, when everything is going well, and the sun is shining, and everyone is cheerful around me – sure I agree.

But what about when things aren't going well, when you feel like you are getting nothing right. When your world has become pressured and demanding – at those times – and I'm being honest with you – God's commands do feel burdensome.

The command to make reading and meditating on God's word a priority.

The command to draw on the joy of the Lord, rather than giving into grumpiness.

The command to love everyone around me, even those who are prickly.

So, why does John say God's commands are not burdensome?

Well, it all has to do with the experience of God's love towards us personally.

That's why John starts the grand finale of his letter by saying,

**"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his children as well. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.**

The only way that you can really demonstrate that you love God is through obeying His commands.

But, our obedience of God's commands should never be done begrudgingly, or out of a sense of duty, that is undertaken through gritted teeth.

If our Christian life degenerates into serving God, and his Church, without any accompanying joy, we need to go back and remind ourselves of who loved us first (see Revelation 2:4-5).

That's why John connects our obedience to God's commands with our experience of God's love.

What he is saying is, when a person truly believes that Jesus Christ has forgiven their sin and rescued them from the devil's power, the Spirit of God will flood them with assurance that they are now the child of a loving heavenly Father.

And that same Spirit fills them with God's love, so that God becomes to them, the object of all their affections.

And this love manifests itself in their desire to obey and serve their heavenly Father with joy.

It is the same in loving human relationships. You don't find it burdensome to do what someone you love profoundly asks you to do.

So, even if I do need to push myself, by gulping down a shot of coffee, to read God's written word, the more I meditate on God's promises, and pray over them as I walk with Toby in the morning, the more my spirit is fed, nurtured and refreshed.

For God's Spirit in my heart witnesses to my spirit the faithfulness of God, and my faith in Him is built up and strengthened.

That's why John continues to say,

**<sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

Three times we are reminded that we are overcomers, who are overcoming.

And this is not the first time we are called 'overcomers'.

Paul said the same when he wrote, "**... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**" (Romans 8:31)

The Greek word is *hupernikē* from which we get the word *Nike*. No wonder they used the word – those who wear Nike gear are winners!

But Paul writes, we are not just 'conquerors' we are '*more than* conquerors' that's why he added the word 'hyper' or 'super' to it.

There is a little illustration that I really love that brings this point home.

Think of Muhammad Ali, the famous American boxer. For months he prepares his body to face his opponent, he practices his swings, eats the right food, learns how to dodge his opponent. When the match commences, he suffers some blows to his face, one of his eyes gets swollen, so much that he can hardly see. But at the end of the match, he is the winner! He is declared the conqueror!

But Muhammad Ali is not the only one who gets to enjoy the winner's prize. His loving wife is the one who gets to walk down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan and buy a new outfit from Prada – she is 'more than a conqueror!'

In the same way Jesus Christ is the Conqueror and our Champion. He took the blows, the slaps, the spitting and shame for our sake. He was nailed to the cross and paid the price for us.

But, we are 'more than Conquerors!' We did not go through all the suffering that Jesus Christ went through, yet today, we are enjoying the fruits of His suffering.

That's what makes us 'super conquerors' or 'overcomers'.

But John gets even more specific. Remember he wrote,

**"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith"**

Once a person, through their faith in Jesus Christ, becomes a Christian – an 'in-Christ-one', they are born again, justified and adopted into the family of God.

But how does this 'in-Christ-one' look like to the devil and his demons?

Because they are 'in Christ', the Conqueror who totally destroyed him, and embarrassed him in front of all his cronies (see Colossians 2:15), the Christian is invincible in the ultimate sense.

That's why those who believe in Jesus Christ have 'overcome the world'.

Let's remember, 'the world' is the human systems and structures which are under the control and power of the evil one.

Our faith in Christ has removed us from the devil's grasp.

Our eternal salvation is secure, for death has been defeated.

And nothing can remove us from our Saviour's loving hold.

Is that not what Paul wrote?

**"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 8:38)

That's what makes us an overcomer and more than conqueror.

And that is true, regardless of how we feel – whether we feel 'under the weather', 'under pressure' or pressed down and utterly shaken – we remain spiritually secure because we are 'in Christ'.

Let me finish by reading how John concludes his letter,

**We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.** (1 John 5:19-20)

Even though the whole world lies in the power of the evil one – we aren't under his power, nor his control.

Or, let me put it this way, 'while we may live IN the world, we are not OF the world. (John 17:16) for we belong to God and live in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13).

But usually – when you're just not feeling very much like an overcomer – the devil is not the only one who needs to be reminded of this spiritual truth.

Often, it is US who need to remind ourselves.

Is that not why Jesus said,

**"I have told you all this so that you will have peace of heart and mind. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world."** (John 16:33)

So if you're feeling the pressure, feeling like you're under pressure, with too many demands being placed upon you – you may like to say what I have been telling myself this week:

"Lord, I don't feel like an overcomer, right now. But, as Paul wrote, "Let God be true and every person a liar" (Romans 3:4) I will not bring into question what Jesus Christ has done on my behalf.

The battle has been won with the enemy and my Saviour has prevailed.


I am in my Saviour and my Saviour is in me. My salvation is secure. Nothing shall separate me from God's love, acceptance and grace – for my faith and trust is in Jesus Christ, and not in my own efforts, nor shortcomings.

Then I may consciously remind myself of the blessings to the ones who remain faithful - the ones who keep showing up, the ones who don't give in to the 'I give up, because it is all too hard' mindset.

And I speak out the promises of Jesus to those who overcome:

I will eat from the tree of life, and not be hurt by the second death. This speaks of the security of my eternal life. I will be given a white stone, and be made a pillar, being a permanent place in the temple of God. I will be given the morning star, which is Jesus Christ and will therefore, reign with Christ on His throne. And finally, I will be clothed in bright garments, representing Christ's righteousness because my name is written in the Lambs book of life.

After reminding myself of these spiritual realities, which no human structure can take away, my feelings begin to catch up with my spiritual knowledge – and I realise, I am an overcomer, through Jesus Christ our Lord!



An umbrella cannot  
stop the rain but it  
allows us to stand in  
the rain.

Faith in God may not  
remove our trials but it  
gives us strength to  
overcome them.