

The Overcomer

1 John 5:1-5 KJV Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. **[2]** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. **[3]** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. **[4]** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. **[5]** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

I. INTRODUCTION -- AN OVERCOMER

This passage brings home to us a very important encouragement to those who are saints of God. The saint literally is an overcomer and this needs to be constantly reiterated. The world and the devil hate what a saint stands for. The word “Christian” was initially used by the pagans in a very derisive term but when one looks at the Bible concerning what a saint is it opens up a whole new understanding of where our place in God really is.

- **Believers**—1 Thess. 1:7; 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:2
- **Christians**—Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16
- **Children**—Matthew 18:3; Ephesians 5:1; 1 Peter 1:14
- **Children of God**—John 1:12; Romans 8:16; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 3:1
- **Children of Light**—Ephesians 5:8; Luke 16:8
- **Children of Promise**—Gal. 4:28
- **Sons of the Day**—1 Thess. 5:5
- **Sons of the Kingdom**—Matthew 13:38
- **Friends of Jesus Christ**—John 15:15; James 2:23
- **Brethren**—Matthew 28:10; Acts 1:15; 11:1; 14:2; 16:2; 28:14; Romans 8:29; 1 Cor. 8:12; 15:6; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 4:21; Col. 1:2; 1Thess. 4:9; 5:27; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:2; Heb. 2:11; 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:14; 3:16; 3 John 3-5; Rev. 12:10
- **Sheep**—John 10:1-16; 10:26-27; 21:16-17; Heb. 13:20

- **Saints**—Acts 9:13; 9:32; 9:41; 26:10; Romans 1:7; 12:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; 3:8; Phil. 1:1; 4:21-22; Col. 1:2; 1:4; Philemon 5; Heb. 13:24; Jude 3. (Also may be referred to as holy ones.)
- **Soldiers**—Phil. 2:25; 2 Tim. 2:3; Philemon 2
- **Witnesses**—Heb. 12:1
- **Stewards**—1 Peter 4:10
- **Fellow Citizens**—Eph. 2:19
- **Lights of the World**—Phil. 2:15
- **The Elect**—Matt. 24:22; 24:24; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33
- **The Chosen**—Matt. 22:14; Col. 3:12; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9; 2 John 1, 13
- **The Called**—Romans 1:6-7; 8:28; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1:24
- **Ambassadors of Christ**—2 Cor. 5:20
- **Heirs**—Roman 8:17; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7; James 2:5
- **Branches in the Vine**—John 15:15; Romans 11:16-21
- **Members of the Body of Christ**—Romans 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12; 12:27; Eph. 3:6; 4:12; 5:23; Col. 1:24; 3:15
- **Living Stones**—1 Peter 2:5
- **The Beloved of God**—Romans 1:7; Ephesians 5:1; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Jude 1
- **Followers of Christ**—Mark 9:41
- **Sons of Abraham**—Gal. 3:7
- **Disciples**—John 15:8; Acts 6:1-2; 6:7; 9:1; 9:26; 11:26; 15:10
- **Letters of Christ**—2 Cor. 3:3
- **Servants of Christ**—1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; Rev. 6:11
- **The Godly**—2 Peter 2:9
- **The People of God**—Heb. 4:9; 1 Peter 2:10
- **A Royal Priesthood**—1 Peter 2:9
- **The Salt of the Earth**—Matt. 5:13
- **Vessels for Honor**—2 Tim. 2:21
- **The Righteous**—Matt. 13:43
- **Strangers and Aliens**—1 Peter 2:11
- **Members of the household of God**—Eph. 2:19

He is triumphant and persevering. Every struggle the saint battles is not of his own making, it is a sinister plot of the devil to thwart and discourage at every

point along the way (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6). The greatest level of spiritual warfare is entirely aimed at the mind in hopes that the devil can skew the thinking which affects a saint in making decisions concerning spiritual matters. But in the end the saint of God will be an over-comer.

An overcomer is one who does not belong to this world. John struggled with the mindset of those to whom he was writing this to because they could not relate to these ideas of being someone who did not belong to this world. They lived under the confined thinking of the Greeks that could not grasp the idea of being an overcomer. In Greek mythology, the villains were always larger than life and bigger than any good. Their belief held that nothing human could be an overcomer, it was only the “gods” who could overcome and even some of them were not so grand. So when John insists that a saint has overcome the evil one, the law, death, judgment, the grave, ignorance, and the world (1 John 5:4-5), it was difficult for some of those saints to really grasp. Even presently all of these things exist when we overcome because of the power of the Spirit.

II. THE MARKS OF THE OVERCOMER

John will now embark in this passage to show the marks of the overcomer. A couple of words that might be used interchangeably with overcomers are victors or winners.

The Greek word for overcomer is **νικάω** nikaō. This word appears frequently in the writings of John. In the NT, it is used 28 times and 24 times it is specific to the writings of John. Thayer’s Lexicon gives the following definition: to conquer; to carry off the victory, or to come off victorious. Of Christ it indicates that He is victorious over all His foes. Of Christians it means that they hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions. In our times, an athletic brand, Nike, has brought into its meaning of victory. The Grecians had a goddess named Nike who aided Zeus in his battle against the Titans. Consider that John was taking a term using the pagan background to give the saints the idea of their invincibility because of the work of the Spirit in their lives.

John 16:33 KJV These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have **overcome** the world.

Jesus used this word to speak of His own victory over the world of Satan and the demonic. The saint of God can take great cheer in the fact that because the evil system has been overcome, we can do so also. Paul took this to a greater level in the following passages of Scripture:

Romans 8:37 KJV Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

1 Corinthians 15:57 KJV But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was stating that we have been made “super-conquerors” through Jesus Christ who loved us and gave His life for us. To what effect have we been made “super-conquerors”? Allow a couple of passages of Scripture to give us the answer:

Romans 8:38-39 KJV For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 KJV So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. [55] O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? [56] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Much confidence in God and His power can be taken in understanding these simple passages. Even though it is simple in a very straightforward way, the devil will do everything within his power to get us to doubt these great promises of Scripture. The devil routinely works to make simple spiritual truths to become muddled and complex in our hearts which causes our faith to waver. Having an

understanding of this places an important priority on our relationship with the Scripture and our treasuring of it.

A. 1 John 5:1, 4-5—The Overcomer is One who Believes

1 John 5:1 KJV Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1 John 5:4-5 KJV For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. **[5]** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

There will be an ongoing belief in Jesus Christ. The faith and desire that a saint of God has is literally a deposit from God into his soul. This faith that has been placed within us at the New Birth (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:1-10) causes us to overcome the world. The one thing that we must have victory over is the world because the world is full of:

Suffering	Wickedness	Pride
Disease	Drunkenness	Arrogance
Corruption	Envy	Pain
Death	Murder	Hurt
Hate	War	Selfishness
Bitterness	Arguments	Greed
Immorality	Backbiters	Etc.

The list could literally be endless and yet through the shed blood of Jesus Christ at Calvary, the saint is made an overcomer of all these things. To be a recipient of all of these benefits should foster a desire for all men to come to a place of spiritual transformation through the New Birth. This should be the very driving force behind every ambition of life: to be saved and filled with the Spirit. Instead there are many who have determined to drink at the lesser substitutes and alloys of a worldly life.

He is “born of God”—spiritually born of God. It is his faith that overcomes the world. What does this mean?

- *It means that God gives the believer victory over all the trials and temptations of life—John 16:33; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Peter 2:9.*
- *It means that God gives the believer victory over all the forces and difficulties of life—Romans 8:35, 37-39; 2 Cor. 2:14; Psalm 28:7; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 43:1-2.*
- *It means that God gives the believer victory over sin—Romans 6:6-8; 6:11-14; 6:22; 1 Peter 2:24.*
- *It means that God gives the believer victory over death—John 5:24; Heb. 2:14-15.*
- *It means that God gives the believer victory over judgment—John 3:16-18; Romans 5:8-10.*
- *It means that God gives the believer victory over fear and despair and fills him with love, joy, and peace—John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 5:10-11; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Peter 5:8-10.*

It means that God gives the believer victory over Satan and all other spiritual forces—Eph. 6:11-13; Col. 2:15.

(The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible, Peter-Jude; pp. 306-307)

B. 1 John 5:1-2—The Overcomer is One who Loves God

1 John 5:1-2 KJV Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. **[2]** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

An overcomer will love God and love those that God loves. The New Birth brings a man into a love relationship with God.

1 John 2:10-11 KJV He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. **[11]** But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

1 John 3:10 KJV In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

1 John 3:17 KJV But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1 John 4:7 KJV Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

1 John 4:21 KJV And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

The more we love someone, the greater our desire to do good for them. A man who loves will be consciously consumed in doing these things. Love creates a hunger for fellowship. It is a fact that if going to church, giving oneself to prayer, hungering for heart-felt worship, desiring the Word of God, longing to see God do mighty things both in salvation and healing, are tasks that one finds hard to do these are probably indicators that one is lost. On the other hand, a desire for spiritual growth and a hunger for knowing God is also an indicator of where people are in their relationship with God.

C. 1 John 5:3—The Overcomer is One who Obeys

1 John 5:3 KJV For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

True faith always produces love which will in turn produce obedience. Faith, love, and obedience are all factors that work together that move a saint toward a greater degree of perfection. True love rushes to the will of the one who is in need.

1 John 5:2 KJV By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

In verse 2, the word “keep” is from the Greek word **τηρέω** (tēreō) which indicates to guard from loss or injury. Although the same word is used in 5:3 it is

used with a differing sense of meaning. In v. 2, the implication is an action and in v. 3, the sense is that it is a described attitude.

John 14:15 KJV If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:21 KJV He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

The equivalent is that sustained love will lead to sustained obedience. As a saint matures into the life of an overcomer, he will find that the love he has for God is going to be marked by a motivating love that seeks to accomplish the will of God.

Deuteronomy 13:4 KJV Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 KJV Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

1 Samuel 15:22 KJV And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

The commandments of the Lord are not burdensome and we should not have a reluctance to want to do the will of God. Obedience comes from the heart (Romans 6:17) and the saint will find that he is not forced to do the will of God because of a motivating love (1 Peter 5:2). If there is not an inner desire to serve God out of a love for Him, in the long run this man will not stand the test of time. Grudging obedience is not conducive to our relationship with God. Note David's attitude in Psalm 119 concerning love and obedience:

Psalms 119:14 KJV I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

Psalms 119:16 KJV I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Psalms 119:24 KJV Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.

Psalms 119:54 KJV Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Psalms 119:97 KJV MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Psalms 119:103 KJV How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

In great contrast to what David states about the ways and laws of God, our society has determined to do everything possible to sanitize righteousness from public life. God's ways and man's ways clash in such a manner that sinful men will go to great lengths to remove God from their world. Consider any form of worldly entertainment and the majority of it will seek to popularize the things that are opposed to the laws of God. Love is more than an emotional feeling, it is an act of the will but it is never grievous. All of God's laws are for our benefit.

Matthew 11:28-30 KJV Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

D. 1 John 5:4-5—The Overcomer is One who is Victorious

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

Coming to the conclusion of the matter in this passage it is helpful to look to what John wrote in Revelation 2-3 concerning the seven churches in Asia. At the end of each church that was addressed, it was very clearly described that no matter what type of spiritual environment that there will be overcomers in the midst of it. The inference is that just because there may be attendance in a church, this is not necessarily a sign that one is even saved much less living and fulfilling the role of an overcomer. It is imperative for us to daily examine our relationship with God in light of His requirements and not our own feelings.

Ephesus

Revelation 2:7 KJV He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The promise to the overcomer was the tree of life in Heaven. This will be much more than Eden. The tree of life symbolizes eternal life. Therefore the promise to the overcomer is eternal life in Heaven.

Smyrna

Revelation 2:11 KJV He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

The promise to the overcomer is that he will not be hurt by the second death. The first death is physical and the second death is spiritual. It is also an eternal death. The overcomer will not die spiritually or eternally (Rev. 20:6). In the first resurrection, Jesus Christ experienced the first fruits of death for man and overcame death, hell, and the grave.

Pergamos

Revelation 2:17 KJV He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The promise to the overcomer is a reward of hidden manna and a white stone. Those who hold fast to His name will experience the hidden manna. There was pot of manna in the Ark of the Covenant and it was placed in the Tabernacle. This is a reference to all that is in Christ, the overcomer will have it given to him for overcoming.

John 6:31-35 KJV Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. **[32]** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. [33] For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. [34] Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. [35] And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Once the saint gains entrance into Heaven there will be a full reality of what Jesus Christ really means to us. Presently in our relationship with God, we only have a part of the benefits that come with being a saint of God but when Heaven is finally gained there will be an opening of this relationship that will be from another world. This is why the devil works so diligently in an effort to skew our thoughts about what Heaven is really going to be like. If he can make it seem as if there will be only floating on clouds and playing harps, he uses this very weak analogy to appeal to the flesh and say that such a place will be forever “boring” and not worth really living for. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is still much about Heaven that is hidden and the overcomer will gain access to it.

John also mentions a white stone will be given to the overcomer. This is a diamond that will be presented. In the ancient times, at the athletic events the winner would be given a diamond that would allow him access to places all over the nation for rites of celebration at the winner’s achievement. The crystal gem was the only thing that would admit the winner into a place with the other winners.

Furthermore, John mentions a new name that will be given to the overcomer. It will be engraved on the stone by God. No one can know the name but God and it will be specific to the man who is presented with the stone. Apparently Heaven is going to be more than just a large area where a mass of perfect spiritual beings are present with God. The mention of this stone with the name engraved on it gives some determination that Heaven will be a place that past victories will be celebrated continuously throughout eternity. It will be an incredible society of individual identities that God will honor forever.

Thyatira

Revelation 2:26-28 KJV And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: [27] And he shall rule them with a

rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. [28] And I will give him the morning star.

A characteristic of the overcomer is noted in this verse, “keepeth my works unto the end.” An overcomer is one who endures the race and completes it with grace. The overcomer will be given authority over the nations of the earth during the millennial kingdom. The overcomer will rule in tandem with Jesus Christ and the rod of iron gives him the unique ability to strike down any work of evil that might surface (Matthew 25:21-23). The word “rule” gives the indication of being a shepherd which will direct people toward a relationship with the One, True God.

In addition will be presence of the morning star (Revelation 22:16). Clearly we will have the ability to have the entire revelation of Jesus Christ in accomplishing the task we are called to do. Periodically in this life through the work of the Spirit and the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14), the overcomer has limited insight into spiritual matters of the church and the direction of life for the Church, it often is just a brief bit of insight into what to do or which direction to go and then the revelation and wisdom stops. The presence of the Morning Star (Jesus Christ) will give tremendous direction into what we are working toward at that moment.

Sardis

Revelation 3:5 KJV He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The overcomer will be given a white garment. There are some in Sardis who allowed their garments to become spoiled by the world but not those who are overcomers. Their attire will be a symbol of righteousness, purity, holiness, and the glory of God. It is a reflection of the righteousness of Jesus Christ that was imputed to the saint of God. The overcomer not only receives honor but he receives the security that will never be removed. In John’s time, the citizens would often have their names placed on rolls and if a crime was committed they would have their names removed. However as persecution escalated, the Christians would have their names removed from the rolls of the cities because they were put into the category of the vilest of criminals. What of this treatment?

Are we willing to endure this kind of stigma in our times and be placed in the category with the dregs of society because of our beliefs?

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:12 KJV Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

In the ancient ruins of Greece, Turkey, and other places, the temples all had pillars that had the name of people on them. It was a great earthly honor for one's name to be placed on these pillars in places of pagan worship. The pillars were permanent in stone and often were overlaid with marble and gold so that for ages to come they would be as noticeable to the following generations as possible. It would serve as a perpetual honor to those who were enshrined on the pillar.

John takes this same thought and declares that the overcomer will have a pillar placed in the Temple. Furthermore there will not be any presence of pride in the accomplishment for there will be the incredible wonder that will fill us with gratitude in knowing that if it were not for the grace of God none of it would have ever been fulfilled! Also on the overcomer, there will be the name of God written and the name of the city on him.

Laodecia

Revelation 3:21 KJV To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Before looking at the overcomer that is mentioned in Laodecia, notice the escalation of what has occurred with the overcomers in these two chapters in Revelation:

- Eternal Life
- Paradise of God
- Never to be hurt by the Second Death

- A full fellowship with the bread of Jesus Christ
- A crystal diamond that admits one to the celebration
- A personal name that God has specified for each overcomer
- A return to earth to rule in a place of delegated authority
- Wearing a white garment that symbolizes worthiness and righteousness
- A name that will never be erased from the book of life
- A pillar in the Temple of God with his name on it
- Never having to run from Heaven in fear
- A name literally written into the being of the overcomer

All of this will be given to the overcomer but now Laodemia seems to mark the pinnacle in that the overcomer will rule on the throne with Christ. It is doubtful that Heaven is going to be a place where one looks around to see who is there or who is not there but rather Heaven is going to be a place that the overcomer will have to consider for a long, long time, "What am I doing here?" Not a one of the saints have a real right to claim Heaven as their own but it is simply a culmination of the work of the Spirit and the grace of God that has gained them access to the place!

Jesus Christ will put us in a place of complete authority at the end. Therefore it is imperative that every single one of us make sure that we endure to the end!