1 John 5:3-6 3In fact, this is love for God: that we keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4because everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. 5Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Did you see that phrase in this section that is so important? It is the phrase **“everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”** Do we grasp the utter wonder of that phrase and the times the word “overcome” is used? In just our section, the word overcome is used three times. I would think that such a repetition of a word is a great clue as to its importance.

But don’t let the ways of the world distract you here. I can think, especially through the sixties and seventies of the many times I heard this group or that group who were picketing or marching for their cause and very often the phrase most often heard then was, “We shall overcome.” I will confess, even back then, this worldly phrase bothered me.

It bothered me because here would be one group chanting this little phrase and then in the next news segment there would be another group protesting and they were chanting the same phrase. The problem was that both groups were actually opposed to each other. The first time I saw that I thought, “Well, if that group is gonna overcome and then this group is gonna overcome, we will basically have gained a whole lot of nothing, because all that happened was this group overcame that group and then got overcome by the group they overcame. It was all horribly confusing. It actually lead me to believe that most protestors in life actually don’t know what is actually going on.

In truth, the only group, the only gathering that I think can rightfully sing “We shall overcome” is the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. Actually, we should probably not be singing “We shall overcome” but rather “we have overcome, because of Jesus. In Jesus we have overcome. We have overcome sin, death and the devil. We have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and we have learned that there is nothing to fear. We can do this overcoming only in and through Jesus.

Here’s the fact. God has promised that because of what Jesus has done the world is overcome. It is a word that means “to conquer, to win the victory.” So sure and certain is this promise of God that our text says very positively to us, **“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”**

Think of that! More important, let that wonder strike home. We have already gained the victory. Because of Jesus sin cannot condemn us, death cannot harm us, the sorrows and fears of hell cannot touch us. We have already gained the victory. On the Day of Judgment, when Jesus returns in splendor and glory, that factual victory will be plainly seen and enjoyed by all those who will be called to live with God in the new heaven and earth. This declaration of victory is one of the greatest promises in Jesus!

Of course, there is one small problem. We are humans in the world. It doesn’t seem to us that the world is overcome. Seems like the world is gaining the upper hand, that the message of Christ is being rather successfully squandered by those in the world. Yet here is where faith comes in. A person who is “”Born of God” is a person who has faith. It is this faith that guarantees that the promises of God, especially this “overcoming” is for us. So for us, the key is faith. Faith, not what you think faith is, but what God says faith is. God’s faith is the one that counts. What does God have to say about faith? Let’s look at our text under the theme: **A FAITH THAT OVERCOMES!**

So let’s start by talking about what faith is. Our text makes this statement right at the beginning. **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”** Just based on that line, what we can first conclude is that faith is believing. Now, so there is no confusion, believing is trusting, being sure and confident in something. When I go to sit down, I must believe that the chair is going to hold me up. If I am going to take a trip I want to have faith in the vehicle I am in, to be sure I get there safely. So it is clear that faith is to believe, to have trust and confidence in something. To have that faith is often the result of experiential knowledge, what we have lived and known. But we need to be careful. Faith is not about your feelings. Faith is not about your goodness. For that matter, faith has very little to actually do with you, other than the fact that you have and practice your faith. Here’s an important thing. God directs you to exactly what your trust and confidence is to be about.

Our little verse directs us to contemplate that believing is based on the fact that **“Jesus is the Christ.”** I will tell you that there is nothing left to the imagination here. Jesus is the Christ. He is the promised one, the savior, the forgiver of sins, the Son of David, the virgin born, the Son of God, the crucified, the one who died and the one who has risen from the dead. Such are the promises of God concerning the Christ and such is exactly what Jesus has come to do and has done. Jesus is true God and man. Jesus is the risen One of God, the Savior of mankind, the overcomer of the Devil, the world, and the sinful flesh. In other words, Jesus is what our entire faith from beginning to end is about.

God says to us that the only kind of faith that counts is a faith in Jesus. Jesus as the Christ. Jesus as the promise fulfiller. Jesus as the one who now sits on the right hand of God and is the judge of all, the living and the dead. So again, without any doubt we have to say that Jesus is what counts. Note it is not works. It is not your feelings. It is not the depth of your sins. It is Jesus. Clearly, we need to pay attention to what Jesus is about and make sure we get the message of Jesus right. We have some clear guidelines for ourselves. The first thing I always like to remember in faith is that faith is based on the Word, which is Jesus. We can’t know God, can’t know his salvation and truth without the Word. So the Word is everything for us as God’s children. None of the stuff that I have told you so far is anything but the truth of the Word. We don’t know of the promises, the virgin birth, the crucifixion and resurrection without the Word. It must all be based on Jesus the Word!

How else does our text describe faith? It says, **“And everyone who loves the God who has given birth also loves one who has been born of him. This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep his commandments.”** Now I will tell you that John’s language here is just a bit confusing, but if you know the entire little book that is before us what he says does indeed make sense. The God who has given birth is indeed the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has sent his son into the world, born of a virgin, in order to be our Savior from sin. So without a doubt, the first phrase is speaking to the fact that faith loves God. It then goes on and speak of loving one who has been born of him. That phrase is best understood as those who are believers in God, in other words, those who by faith have become born of God. We especially see that in the next phrase which spoke to us on how we know we love the children of God. So those born of him is a reference to each and every believer in Jesus, whom we love because of Jesus.

In other words, God’s love pours from us. We love God. By the way, when you say you love someone do you abuse them, ignore them, or treat them like dirt? If you say you love God, do you despise what He says, do you ignore His Word, and act as if you are the lord and master? To love God means something. Our love is not only directed at God himself but then notice that this section tell us that our love for God is also directed at our fellow believers!

As fellow believers we care about each other. We want to help each other, guide each other and clearly be a support group for each other. Most of all, we want to help each other in our faith and lives. Love doesn’t mean we ignore that you are missing church or that you are no longer demonstrating your love for God in your life. Love doesn’t mean that I let you do what you want, especially if what you want is contrary to the plan and command of God. How is it love if I ignore that you are destroying your earthly life? But even more pointed, how is it love if I just stand back and let you destroy your very soul through a life that God says we are not to be involved in?

Again, faith is loving God. Why? Earlier John said, **“This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** And again John writes: **“We love because he first loved us.”** Let us work at growing this love of God. We do that as we again and again simply hear His Word and believe that God has sent his Son to be our Savior. That knowledge then leads us to practice love for each other.

So faith is also loving our fellow believers. If you went back through this little book of John you would read the following in this regard. **“The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is still in the darkness. The one who loves his brother remains in the light…This is how we have come to know love: Jesus laid down his life for us. And we also should lay down our lives for our brothers…This then is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love one another just as he commanded us…. If anyone says, ‘I love God,” but hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen? This then is the command we have from him: The one who loves God should also love his brother.”** I will tell you, loving your fellow believer is clearly a big theme for our faith.

And if you would, let’s touch a bit more on the further practice of this love for God and fellow believer. Go back to verse 2. **“This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep his commands.”**

Again let’s just go back and look at a few other things that John writes in this book to help clarify what he means here. Almost right from the beginning he says, **“God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him but still walk in the darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice. But if we do walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, 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 out to be a liar, and His Word is not in us.”** These words help us get that balance between the sin of our lives and being the children on God. More from John. **“If anyone keeps God’s word, the love of God is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: The one who says he remains in him should walk as Jesus walked.”**

Seriously, we could go on and on with passages like this. I will try and help you grasp what is being said. As a child of God we are to love God and treasure God and his Word above everything. When God’s Word tells us not to do this or that, such is what we strive to do. We might fail at it, but we are still working to do the right thing. This is my Christian life. And when I realize that I have sinned against the Lord’s will, then I repent: I am sorry, I strive to stop that sin, and I look to God for strength against this sin. If I just give myself over to sin and declare sin my right and what I want, then I am no longer a child of God and a recipient of God’s blessings.

So, if I am sexually involved outside of the bonds of marriage, God says this is immorality. It doesn’t matter what you say or the reasons you have for such behavior, God says it is immoral and God says He has cut you off from heaven! Do you need it easier than that? God says, “Don’t go swimming in the Lake of Immorality.” But every day your go out for a swim. If that is true, you are not a child of God. Let’s say you only go once a week. You are not a child of God. Now, we are not like some who would say that going out to the lake is a sin, but the truth of the matter is it is a lot easier to end up in the water when you go there than it is to go in the water when you are not there. Don’t put yourself in the position to sin and then pretend you just slipped up! The true Christian sees and stops the sin. You can’t walk in darkness and claim you are of the light. You can’t love sin and then claim you love God. As Paul puts it, you can’t sin and then just claim that grace has saved you. We don’t go on sinning because we feel Jesus will forgive us. In Jesus we are repentant and stop. This is the Christian way.

Now, here is the best part. We see our sins. We repent of our sins. Jesus forgives us and helps us overcome the problems of sin in our lives. Note, that to overcome, means to defeat, over power, and win the victory against something. Jesus tells us again and again that we can overcome the sins of our lives, of this world, when we keep our focus on Jesus. The problem is that too often, too many of us focus on the sin and then figure Jesus has to forgive. Nope. That is exactly what 1 John is written to speak against. Wallowing in sin is not walking in the light. But in Jesus we can and do overcome. It takes faith, genuine faith. It starts with the full grasp that Jesus Christ is God and Lord, the God who gave his life for you and wants to share his salvation with you. So hear and love Jesus. Honestly, if you start at the “he is my Savior part” it is so much easier to hear and love him. That is the faith that overcomes! That is the faith that gains the total victory because it shares the victory of Jesus. May God bless the Light in your life! Amen.