

**OVERCOMING THE WORLD**

1 John 5:1-5

**Intro:** I want us to think together tonight about the world.

The word “world,” or its companion word, αἴων, which is often translated *world* in the NT, is used generally three ways in our Bibles. The word *world* is used to speak of creation, the wonders of that which God has made, its beauty and grandeur, its reflection of the glory of God. It is also used to speak of the people who live in the world. John 3:16 is an illustration of this usage. But the meaning that I want to speak of tonight is that of the Satanic world system, that which constitutes a threat to the child of God, is the same in every generation, and poses a danger to the people of God regardless of age, nationality. It speaks of the evil that is in this world in which we live. It is an unseen world, yet we can see evidence of it pervading and influencing every area of life. No person, saved or unsaved, is immune to its influence. It contains countless temptations to turn us away from God, from the Gospel, and from all of Scripture. We were all once a part of it until we were saved. But even after we are saved it poses a threat to our fellowship with God although it can not do anything to cause us to lose our salvation. However, there are many people in the world, and always have been, who consider themselves to be Christians because they have Christian parents, or because they know what the Gospel is, and perhaps have memorized a few verses of Scripture. But they do not show in their lives that they have been born again, that they are new creatures in Christ. And even those who are truly saved are continually faced with temptations to sin which are presented to them in this world.

When the Lord prayed the wonderful prayer that is recorded for us in John 17, one thing that the Lord prayed for His people, was this:

15 I pray not that thou shouldest taken them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil (John 17:15).

The Greek scholars whom I have consulted, either in person, or in their books, believe that “the evil” at the end of this verse should read, *the Evil One*. So they take it as a reference to the Devil, called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). And in this latter verse the word for world is αἰῶνος, thinking of the world as a period of time, or of a period of time in this world.

So we need to be guarded, we need to be protected, from the evil that is in

the world, and it is everywhere around us. I think I am safe in saying that if the Lord prayed that prayer for His own with that request while He was here on earth, that that is also one of his major requests for us, for His people, in every generation. This was the issue in the words found in Luke 22:31-32 where the Lord was speaking about the Devil and Peter:

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Keep these verses in mind because I will refer to them again when I come to our text in 1 John 5.

One thing that happened to all of us when we were saved was stated in one of the verses I read to you this morning. I am thinking especially of John 15:19 where the Lord said to His disciples,

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love His own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Before we were saved we were not only in this world, but we were “of” it. After we were saved we were still in this world, but we were no longer “of” it. We don’t belong to this world, but we are still “in” it, and subject to its temptations.

Now this is far too big a subject to hope to deal with it all in one message, but I hope that I can say enough to get all of us thinking about it, and doing something about it. Let me deal with a couple of passages before I go to our text for this evening. And I am thinking about verses that deal specifically with this evil world in which we live.

The first verses I want us to look at are very familiar verses. Perhaps you have memorized them from just hearing them over and over. I am referring to Romans 12:1 and 2.

Paul had just completed the greatest of all statements given to us in the Word of God about the Gospel and salvation. He had covered the subjects of our condemnation before God, how sinners have been justified, and our need to be sanctified, or made holy, and finally our future glorification! He has also shown how Israel figures into all of this. He concludes by expressing His amazement at what God has done.

But then beginning with verse 12 he stresses the way in which we are to

live. It is easy for us to say that we are Christians, and that is important if it is true. But the real test is not in what we say, but in the way in which we live. And this is where Paul spoke of the world. Let me read them to you again. As I have said you might be able to quote them, and that is good. But as I repeat them, you ask yourself, and I will ask myself, if these two verses describe us. **(Repeat Romans 12:1-2.)**

Note that Paul speaks of our bodies, our physical bodies. We could add to this what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20. It is important for every Christian to know that his or her body is included in salvation. And so we are to be concerned about whether or not we are glorying God in our bodies, and in our spirits, that is, outwardly and inwardly. It is important that we have consciously given ourselves, completely to God. We give ourselves to obey Him, to do His will, to live for Him instead of living for ourselves. This is our “living sacrifice.”

But what did Paul say goes along with this? In verse 2 we read, “And be not conformed to this world.” The Devil lost us when we were saved. The Lord has taken us away from Satan, but Satan is always going to be trying to get us back.

What does it mean that we are not to be conformed to this world? Well, the world put us under constant pressure to talk like they talk, and to live like they live. I heard one pastor say that when we are in high school the pressure is on to make us look like the world looks, to dress like they dress, and to talk like they talk. But when we get into college the pressure is on to make us *think* like the world thinks.

I recently heard a statement by a professor at Stanford University to the effect that it is the purpose of a college education to make you question everything that your parents have ever taught you. And I would say that they are doing a good job at what they are doing. The word is “conform.” And if you and I don’t conform, they will do all that they can to make us conform. The world doesn’t want us around if we are intent on being different.

Now the major difference that I would make about the pastor who said what high school tries to do to us, compared with what college tries to do to us, is that the pressure doesn’t start in high school, and it doesn’t quit when you get out of college. The pressure to conform is on us as long as we live. Pastor Will has been emphasizing that there are two wisdoms in

this world, and only two: the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of God. The world hates the Bible. It hates Christ. It hates holiness. And it hates God. We read this morning that you can't love God if you hate Christ.

How do we measure up to Romans 12:1 and 2? It's one thing to know a couple of verses by memory, but it's quite another thing to be doing what those verse tell us to do. Do you get up in the morning telling the Lord that you love Him, and that you want to obey Him, asking Him to give you the strength to be faithful to Him and to His Word? Romans 12:1 and 2 gives us all a test as to whether we know the Lord, and, if we do, how well are we showing by our lives that we know and love Him.

But now let us go to another passage, and this, like my text, is in 1 John. These, too, are familiar verses, and maybe you have committed them to memory. I am speaking about 1 John 2:15-17. **(Quote.)**

The Apostle John was an old man at the time he wrote these words. It was over thirty years since Paul had completed his epistle to the Romans. But it is clear that the Christians toward the end of the first century, were involved in the same conflict that they were involved in when the Apostle Paul was alive. John was talking to believers. He warned them that they were not to put the world ahead of the Lord, and said that if they did, it was evidence that they were not saved.

But what about the people who say that they love the Lord, but they show a definite preference for the things of the world – the world's approval, the world's standards, or lack of standards; the world's pleasures, the world's money. Ask yourself, would anyone think that you were really a Christian just by the way you live? Talk isn't always cheap, but sometimes it is. But talk backed up by a godly life, is a powerful instrument in the hands of the Lord. The scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees were great talkers, and they deceived a lot of people. But they didn't deceive the Lord, nor did they deceive people who really knew and loved the Lord.

You won't read this in any book about life by a secular writer, nor will you see such a life commended in our newspapers or magazines. But all that is in the world can be summed up under three headings: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These are the fleshly desires of our old nature, and connected with our bodies. "The lust of the

eyes” is the appeal that is made to us by what we see. “The pride of life” is the vain glory of what the world rewards. Paul, speaking of the games which attract so much attention from the world, like Wimbledon, and the World Cup, both of which are going on now. This is what the world loves and promotes. But these are corruptible crowns, and most of them don’t even last a person’s lifetime. And the world is passing away with all of its lust. “But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

But now let me take you finally to 1 John 5, the first five verses. **(Read.)**

My message tonight began as I started thinking about verse 4 – about overcoming the world. The Apostle John did not say that we are going to change the world. The world today is what it became the moment Adam ate the forbidden fruit. It is passing away because the Lord is finally going to judge it. But what does it mean that we are to overcome the world? It means, not that we are going to change it, but it means that by God’s grace we are going to survive all that the world and its people are doing to bring us back into the world.

What is our victory? It is our faith. Now we can read this verse over and over, and all that we may see in it is the faith we exercised when we received the Lord Jesus as our Savior. But going back to those verses I mentioned earlier in Luke 22:31-32, you will remember that when the Lord told Peter that Satan was after him. He also said, “But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Was the Lord praying that Peter would not turn away and give up his salvation? He prayed for a strengthening of his faith. You see we are saved by faith, but we are also to live by faith, a faith that is growing and getting stronger so that we may be able to withstand all of the wiles of the Devil, all of the tricks that the Devil may try to use against us. “With faith it is impossible to please God.”

So to keep from falling before the attacks of the Devil, we must be continually focusing attention on keeping our faith strong. How do we do that?

1) By constantly feeding our souls on the Word of God. I didn’t say just reading; I said feeding. And there is a big difference. If we don’t know how to draw strength from the Word of God, we are going to be an easy prey for Satan. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

2) Our faith is strengthened by prayer, not just saying prayers, but by real prayer. What is real prayer? Real prayer is when we quit trusting in ourselves and rely instead upon the Lord. That test which the Lord allowed

Satan to put Peter through, was the major turning point in his life because it taught him how weak and fragile and undependable he was, and how sufficient the Lord was in meeting his need. How much do we pray? Are we praying without ceasing? Are our prayers an acknowledgment before God that we want to trust in Him and not in ourselves, or in other people?

These are two points on which most Christians are very weak.

But let me mention one more point, arising out of our text, and it is so easy to miss it:

3) If our faith is to be strong so that we will be overcomers, then we need to stay close to the people of God. Fellowship in the church provides strength for us which cannot be obtained in any other way. Read what the Apostle John had to say about fellowship in this epistle.

**Concl:** So we have three things that we need to be concerned about if we are to know in experience that “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” What are they again? The Word of God. Prayer. Fellowship with the Lord’s people.

With these we will not be overcome, but we will overcome. All the forces of Satan cannot defeat the child of God who is trusting the Lord by feeding upon God’s Word, seeking God’s blessing in prayer, and faithful attendance on the meetings of some local church which is primarily concerned about fellowship with God.

Young people, learn this now before you fill your life with a lot of regrets which you will have to remember the rest of your life. Children, you are not too young to learn to enjoy the Bible, to pray, and to appreciate what God will do in your life through other Christians. And for those of us who are well along in life, the battle is still the same that it was in our earlier days. And the remedy is the same: the Word, prayer, and the fellowship of the saints.

We are still at war with the Enemy of our souls. There is still much in us that responds to his temptations. But greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. So says 1 John 4:4b. So let us be faithful, always growing, and growing stronger, until that day when the Lord comes, or when He takes us home. When He comes may He find all of us reading His Word, faithful in prayer, and loving to be with the people of God.

1 John 5:1-5 (7)

But let me mention one more