

Overcoming the world

"I think a Christian can go anywhere," said a young woman who was defending her continued attendance at some very doubtful places of amusement.

"Certainly she can," rejoined her friend; "but I am reminded of a little incident which happened last summer, when I went with a party of friends to explore a coal mine. One of the young women appeared dressed in a dainty white gown. When her friends remonstrated with her, she appealed to the old miner who was to act as guide of the party.

"Can't I wear a white dress down into the mine?" she asked petulantly.

"Yes'm," returned the old man, "there's nothin' to keep you from wearin' a white frock down there, but there'll be considerable to keep you from wearin' one back."

There is nothing to prevent the Christian wearing his white garments when he seeks the fellowship of that which is unclean, but there is a great deal to prevent him from wearing white garments afterwards.

1 John 2: 12 – 17

1) What is the world?

- Although the same word for world "Kosmos" is used as John used in John 3: 16 the context tells us that God loved the inhabitants of the world, but in 1 John he was referring to the systems of the world that are built on our sinfulness.
- Satan is referred to as the god of this world or this age – the time that we are living in, in this world.
 - 2 Corinthians 4: 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- In verse 16 John describes the world as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.
 - Everything in this world comes from our sinfulness.
- The lust of the flesh
 - Galatians 5: 19 – 21 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- The lust of the eyes
 - We have become blind to God and his righteousness so we live by what we can see and lust after.
- The pride of life
 - We have removed God from the centre of life and put ourselves in the centre of everything.
- Although we are all, in our natural state, are influenced by all three of these aspects that make up the ways of the world, they differ from person to person in the way they dominate the person.
- Satan knows our specific weaknesses and tempts us accordingly.
- The more we love the ways of the world the easier it will be for us to be tempted, and consequently fall to that temptation.

2) How do we overcome the world?

- Living as forgiven people
 - I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. (v.12)
 - Before we came to belief in what Jesus had done for us on the cross we lived in our sins, under condemnation and in bondage.
 - When we put our faith in Jesus and what he did for us all of our sins were washed away on His account. This means our debt of sin was put onto his account for him to be responsible to pay. That's what he did when he forgave us.
 - We now need to live as people who have been forgiven and we should not start building up new debt of sin.
 - We ought to live within that clean slate that he's given us.
 - If we continue in sin we give the devil a foothold into our lives again and, instead of overcoming the world, we once again get entrapped by it and our lives of bondage to sin start again.

- If we walk in the righteousness that God gave us when He forgave us then the devil cannot entrap us as he has no hold on righteousness.
- Living in a dynamic relationship with God.
 - I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. (v.13)
 - I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father.
I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. (v.14)
 - John, being the disciple that Jesus loved, knew Jesus experientially and dynamically. He didn't have a theoretical relationship with God.
 - A theoretical relationship with God is one where we know all the right terminology, doctrines, morality, but we don't know Him personally. We aren't living in a dynamic living relationship with him.
 - If God were to withdraw from your lives would you notice the difference? If not then there's a serious problem.
 - Our forgiveness is the start of our relationship with God, however we need to spend time with Him, and His Word to go deeper.
 - The deeper our relationship is with God the stronger we'll be to overcome the world. Theoretical relationships don't offer any strength to overcome as they aren't real.
- Living with the Word of God as the basis of our lives.
 - I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. (v.13)
 - I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (v.14)
 - The indwelling Word of God, along with the empowering of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to stand firm in what is right in the sight of God.
 - Psalm 119: 105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
 - 1 Peter 1: 24 – 25 All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.
 - In the story of the houses that were built on the sand and the rock Jesus was referring to our lives being built on the Word of God – the rock – or anything else – the sand.
 - If we don't have the solid foundation of the Word of God for our lives we won't overcome the world.

3) The outcomes of overcoming the world

- The outcome of overcoming the world is that we have the hope of eternal life.
- John lists rewards for those who overcome and are victorious in Christ, in Revelations
 - I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (2: 7)
 - Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. (2: 10)
 - I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. (2:17)
 - I will give authority over the nations. (2: 26)
 - I will also give that one the morning star. (2: 28)
 - The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. (3: 5)
 - I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. (3: 12)
 - I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. (3: 21)