

“OVERCOMERS” – Pr Jim Sprengle, Easter 6 – May 9, 2021

- I. **1 John 5:4** – ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.
- II. **To each his own.**
 - a. You might say that phrase every now and again as you consider another person’s opinions, decisions, or choices.
 - b. To each his own when it comes to your partners or friends
 - c. To each his own when it comes to your favorite restaurants and food
 - d. For a long time, that phrase just recognized that everyone is different.
 - e. It’s sad, because in the world today, we have taken this simple idea to a whole other level of importance.
 - i. When someone decides to do something, we are required to agree with it and even celebrate the choice
 1. You want a divorce because you want to see other women? Wow, that sounds great! To each his own.
 2. You want to vandalize and riot? Good for you! To each his own.
 3. A young girl in high school says she’s sick of boys and all their antics... she’s going to date girls now... That’s awesome! To each his own.
 4. You want to end your life through the death with dignity law? That’s so wonderful... let’s have a party. To each his own.
 - ii. We are now told that each person has their own truth that cannot be poked or prodded to see if it holds up... because it’s their own, and no one can tell them what is right or wrong.
 1. This is especially true in spiritual matters.
 2. Some people take a lifetime to pick up a spiritual idea here... then pick up another spiritual idea there (kind of like going to the grocery store and picking out products) until they have their truth
 - a. We can see the error in this because all they’ve done is made up their own god
 - b. Nevertheless, we are required to agree with them, well... because it’s their truth
 - iii. Sometimes we can get so frustrated because these people are so far off from the truth, but we cannot convince them no matter what...
 - f. Here’s a thought... maybe we are not called to change someone’s beliefs or “truth” by convincing, arguing or pressuring.
 - i. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 5:12 - “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?”
 - ii. You see, we Christians often forget that people outside the faith who are living by their truths are not Christians influenced by God’s Word!

- iii. Maybe there is a better way to go about all this... to influence using love.
 - iv. We can actually overcome these beliefs and “truths” by our love – our witness to Jesus as we live by and for His gracious instruction
- III. **John wrote this letter to help the Christians he had ministered to.**
- a. Many of these churches were under pressure from false teachers who were breaking down the Christian teachings and pointing them to other “truths” like:
 - i. Jesus isn’t true God and man... He’s just a man created by God
 - ii. Or, Jesus wasn’t human, He was just a spirit
 - iii. Or, the virgin birth was not real
 - b. All of these teachings were getting people off track from the Gospel, and some were in danger of walking away from Christ...why?
 - i. Because these teachings directly contradicted what Jesus Himself taught and revealed!
 - c. So John brings them back to the truth, and then he explains that anyone who believes in Jesus as their Savior – as the Christ – is born again to obey His instruction – His commandments.
 - d. And what are these commandments?
 - i. Love God and love your neighbor
 - ii. Jesus wants us to love
- IV. **Too many times we Christians lack love...**
- a. We sing the song, “They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love” in church on Sunday and the other six days we grumble and snipe about people
 - b. We lament the horrible state of our society and city... and then we go back to reading our paper (or a modern way to say it, our Facebook feed)
 - c. Rather than getting to know the people in our community and serving them in love, we turn inward because they aren’t like us
 - d. In our zeal for justice and righteousness, we say mean things about gay marriage or transgenderism, or undocumented immigrants, or addicts and alcoholics – and we have no intention of finding out more about them.
 - e. You see, in our lack of love, we give all the more reason for those around us to see the Church as a group of hypocrites.
 - f. But again, John reminds us that we were born again to love...
- V. **By God’s great love, He chose us to be His children.**
- a. It’s not an accident that we have two baptism passages over the last two weeks (Philip and the Ethiopian, and today Peter and Cornelius) where God chooses people for baptism and faith.
 - b. God goes out into the world and seeks ALL people.

- c. If you go to the Gospel of John, in chapter 3 Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,” (Jn 3:5)
 - i. When you come to faith and are baptized, you are born again
 - ii. That relationship is what God cares about with all His heart
- d. There’s not one person on the planet whom Jesus did not die for...
 - i. That’s why John 3:16 is for all people – “God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
 - 1. He didn’t die for only the Jewish people, the rich people, the white people, the old or the young... He died for ALL people.
- e. And to bring it all back around... He died for you... personally.
 - i. If you were the only person alive when Jesus went to the cross, He would do it a thousand times over just to save you... just to pay for your sins and make you His own.
 - ii. Even His resurrection was about you – because as Romans 6 tells us – you are connected to the resurrection and have the hope of future glory by your baptism.
- f. You have the gift of faith... You are God’s child by His choice... and because of that, you overcome the world.
- g. Your future is absolutely secure, because no matter what happens... any trial or trouble that comes your way... you win.
 - i. The victory that overcomes the world by faith means you will never die (John 11:26)... yours is the victory in Christ our risen Savior!

VI. **Ultimately, we give all credit and glory to God...**

- a. God’s love overcomes the world...
- b. How do you think God loves the world today?
- c. Certainly He takes care of all the needs of people (regardless if they know Him or not)
- d. But because He first loved us and chose us, we respond by following the example of Jesus... we obey His instruction to love.
 - i. Jesus loved others in service to them – from washing feet to literally dying for them
 - ii. Jesus never shied away from connecting with outcasts and those who didn’t fit in with the majority.
 - iii. Jesus loved people when they had no idea who He was.
- e. So, how does God love the world today? Through you... through me... and all Christians who follow Jesus.
- f. The way God makes His way into our world today is through His followers, and when we connect with others, it is God’s love that is overcoming the world.
- g. Walk away from this place today knowing that God’s love is our love.

- i. We give away what has been poured into our lives abundantly
- ii. The kind of love that gives up everything... but also rises in victory to overcome the world. Amen.