

The Abiding Life and Victory

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 August 2018

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0:00] Well, it's good to be back with you. Thanks for the opportunity to take the missions team to Skyview.! We had a great time together and enjoyed some long days of labor in some areas that, you know, painting.

Who enjoys painting? You got some people that actually enjoy painting, sanding, scraping. Oh, man. Sign me up for a job that I hate the most. That was perfect. It was just...

It was tremendous. But I'll tell you, the team did an outstanding job. Their attitude throughout the week was refreshing to me. And the experience that we had of just being able to see God help us complete some pretty significant projects, but also be able to just enjoy one another's fellowship through the week, it was a real blessing.

We will hope to prepare and kind of give you a recap of that week in a couple of Wednesdays from now. I'll send out an email tomorrow or Tuesday to parents.

August 29th, I think it is. It's a Wednesday. It's when we hope to share with you a little bit more about that experience. So mark your calendars and teens, I'll be sending out an email to you about that.

[1:19] It was also really refreshing to be able to get away last week with our family. And thank you for the privilege of being able to do that. I joked with my kids throughout the week.

I had to have my first and second nap of the day. You know, the 10 o'clock nap and the 2 o'clock nap, it was kind of a must. And it was just really, it was kind of, that was the hallmark of the week. It was just really refreshing. Lots of rest. I needed it after long days of working on various projects, but it was just a joy.

And it's nice to be able to entrust the ministry to capable people. I'll tell you, this is such a unique church. What a joy to be part of Maranatha.

To have so many gifted individuals who can lead in so many different areas. And to be able to entrust the preaching of the word to Pastor David, who did an outstanding job.

[2:21] And it makes going away so much easier, because I don't have to worry about what's happening here. I know it's going to be in very good hands. Looking forward to a couple of weeks from now.

Ben and Ashley, they are just like pumped to come. They cannot wait. I know that there's an announcement maybe going out sometime this week. They're looking for some help with painting, no less.

So those of you who raised your hands, ha ha, I gotcha. No. You're free to paint. I'm sure they would love to have your help.

More than just the work itself, just the fellowship of the experience and helping brother and sister as they're preparing to come. It is so exciting to think that they'll be here in just a matter of weeks. And they're excited about the experience as well. So, we are in a series through 1 John. And as John mentioned earlier in our service, the theme of this morning is overcoming.

[3:26] We serve an overcoming God. I don't know if you can really appreciate the immensity of that statement.

We have an overcoming God. And this truth so shaped the apostle's heart through the experience of the upper room discourse.

You remember that 1 John is really an exposition of the upper room. So instrumental and so inspiring, so convicting were the truths of the upper room.

The moments before the cross that John is gripped by this and he understands the significance of the message here. And he wants to communicate it again to the church of Ephesus.

Because if they're going to be an abiding church, they need to understand there are certain truths that must be representative of their lives.

[4:32] Because they serve an overcoming God, they must also experience an overcoming nature. They must also tap into the supply of the power of the Holy Spirit that allows them to experience victory and triumph day by day.

That is the experience of the believer. The true believer as we'll see in our message today. Here's what Jesus has to say in John chapter 16.

These were the words, I think, that are sticking out in John's mind. Just listen as I read them to you. Jesus says this, right before they leave that upper room and begin making their way to the garden. Jesus says, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart.

I have overcome the world. We serve an overcoming God. Who gives to his people an overcoming quality.

[5:49] An overcoming power. It's not a power that is representative in ourselves alone. But it is a power that we can enjoy and experience because of the indwelling, powerful, alive Holy Spirit.

Spirit. And overcoming power. So why don't we enjoy this overcoming nature? What gets in the way?

I think the thing that gets in the way the most and what we'll look at throughout the morning is that this abiding relationship that we've been talking about for the last couple of months now is what stands in the way really of you being able to really enjoy and experience a consistent overcoming quality.

What stands in my way is I hold God at arm's length. He's welcoming in me and calling me to enjoy intimacy with him.

And so often I find myself distracted or I find myself saying, there's something else I'd rather do at this point. There's something else that's on my agenda.

[7:04] There are too many things going on in my calendar. I can't really participate in this abiding because abiding takes time. But God beckons us to this intimacy.

We've been talking about that all year, really. It began in our study in Isaiah chapter 30, 15. When God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah and he says, Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In repentance and rest is your salvation.

In quietness and in trust is your strength. Do you want to know the saving quality of God?

Then your life must be marked by an abiding in him. A resting in him. A trusting in him.

A waiting for him to answer and to help and to deliver. And to show up in your life to help you in the times where you're most desperate.

[8:17] I think what stands in our way is we don't really savor this relationship that is made available to us.

So this morning as we open up the word of God, and before we open up the word of God, one of the most powerful ways for us to be encouraged by the power of God in his ability to do a mighty work is by hearing a testimony.

So I want to just introduce you to this individual, and we can hear the power of God working in his life to transform him and to help him overcome sin through an abiding relationship with Christ.

My birth mother abandoned me in a motel room when I was three years old.

One of the earliest indicators that something wasn't right was as soon as I was adopted, one of the first things that I did was threaten my sisters with a blunt pocket knife.

[9:38] I graduated from high school and joined the Army. In terms of my life as a soldier, things were going well, but my heart wasn't changed. I was involved in drug use and began to sell drugs and eventually was charged by the military 16 felony counts.

And so I went AWOL and purchased a plane ticket to Los Angeles, California, met some men there who were doing robberies.

We began to rob places from Los Angeles, California, state by state all the way to Texas, where I was arrested. And I was sentenced to 17 years in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

The first weekend that I was in prison, there was a riot. I was a riot. I'm looking and seeing that guys are getting stabbed. I found myself living in a world in which you have to take sides.

I didn't have the hope of the gospel. And so I was beginning to become more and more self-consciously racist. I saw no other option available to me. And that was eventually what led me into a white supremacist prison gang.

[10:48] Every tattoo that I have, it has some sort of connection to the gang. This is actually a swastika made out of sickles.

This is what remains of a Ku Klux Klansman and a burning cross. I've been having these removed, but that's what remains of them at this point. So I was transferred then to a maximum security prison.

It was what was called a gladiator farm. When I arrived on that unit, there was already a war going on between blacks and whites. My next door neighbor yelled at me, I know you have a shank.

I didn't have a shank. I didn't have anything at that point, but I thought I better get one. And so I did. There came a point when the door to my cell and his cell were opened at the same time.

It wasn't supposed to happen, but it did. I came at him with a shank. And thankfully, a guard was able to step in between us just in time. But I was put in solitary confinement as a result of that.

[11:49] I was confirmed as a gang member. What that means is they have the evidence of my tattoos, for one thing. They have the evidence of what I've done. And so they're able then to confine me essentially indefinitely.

One night I was scanning the radio dial, and the Lord used a radio program called Here Comes the Light to shine the light of the gospel into my heart.

And the thing that he dealt with in my heart, first and foremost, was the issue of racism. There was a moment of total despair when I said, I can't do this. And in that moment of despair, I realized I'm going to hell.

And suddenly something changed within me. The Lord did it. And I simply fell on my knees before him. And I said, Lord, change my heart.

Take this away and help me to follow you. What I'd later find out, of course, was that the only group in prison that doesn't segregate according to race were the Christians.

[12:58] I was still in solitary confinement, which is where I needed to be. And the Lord used it to mature me and grow me so that when I did get out of solitary confinement and go back to general population, I was prepared for the hardships that would come.

I spent 10 years in solitary confinement, but I used the time to read, to study. The Lord was growing me in my fellowship with him. It wasn't wasted time.

I simply began to read the Bible for myself. And I started listening to the radio, so I listened to Christian programs on the radio, and I wanted to understand the Bible better. And that's, of course, where I came across a program called Renewing Your Mind.

Though I was in that cell, the Lord was there with me. Despite all the wickedness of my heart and all the evil things that I had done, all the people that I had hurt, especially my own family, he set me free.

My name is Lowell Ivey. I was set free in prison by God's grace. Did you hear that?

[14:09] Two things stand out to me about that video. First is that he experienced fellowship in solitary confinement. What an oxymoron.

And then, that he was set free while he was in prison. That's what God wants to do for everyone in this sanctuary today.

He wants you to experience freedom and deliverance and victory and triumph in the Christian life. But it only happens as we are going to look this morning at 1 John chapter 5.

So if you would please, turn with me to 1 John chapter 5, beginning in verse 1. We'll go verses 1 to 5. And this section of Scripture really is kind of a summary of so many of the things that John has been talking about, especially at the end part of chapter 3, moving on through chapter 4, and now settling in on this key aspect of what the abiding life does here in chapter 5.

Helping to bring all of the pieces together and summarizing them for us, kind of consolidating them all down to these steps of how do we experience the overcoming life as a Christian.

[15:37] If you're a guest with us, you can find 1 John chapter 5 on page 1023. Let me read for us, beginning at verse 1.

1 John chapter 5, So that's where we're going to, towards the end of this message.

We're moving towards verses 3 and 4 to understand the significance, or at least 4 and 5, the significance of an overcoming life.

An overcoming life that happens because of faith in Jesus Christ. We find in this passage this amazing cycle that's taking place, beginning with faith and ending with faith.

Not the same faith by the time you get to the end of the process, because it is a refined faith, it is an improved faith, it is a growing faith. And so when you start the process again, now you're learning new things about who God is.

[17:25] You're experiencing new things about Him. You're loving in new ways. You're obeying in greater depth. And then you're growing again to become a better victorious individual.

And then learning deeper faith, which then begins this process all again until Jesus comes. This process that we find through this first part of the chapter that helps us identify and understand the significance of the steps of an overcoming life.

You can be an overcomer too. Why? Because you serve in overcoming God.

You have an overcoming force, a power, a being indwelling you, the Holy Spirit, if you are a child of God.

You can experience and know and enjoy an overcoming life because you serve an overcoming God. It's amazing to imagine that we can have such a privilege.

[18:33] But that is only possible for those who are walking in the flow of what we're going to read and study this morning. Only those who follow these steps will be able to experience the true wonder of this overcoming life.

Now, we're going to be able to take this in two parts. I know you have all the steps there in your outline this morning. But this may take a couple of weeks.

And I have a couple of weeks because next week we're going to actually finish verses 6 to 12, which kind of provides a little fuller picture. So don't get too nervous if we only get through the first couple of points, which is my tendency, I know.

And then I have to scramble through the last three. But I don't want you to miss the significance of the first parts of this. And don't get concerned. I'll try to stick to the time.

And then we'll pick up what we miss next week. Okay? All right. We're in good shape. First, I want you to see that an overcoming life begins with a correct faith.

[19:45] An overcoming life begins with a correct faith. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

Now, this is an amazing statement. It is both an inclusive statement and an exclusive statement. It is inclusive in that anyone can participate. The door is open. There's accessibility. There is an opportunity for participation.

Everyone who believes can enter in. And if you're a part of the everyone, then you can enjoy the wonder of an overcoming life.

There is this accessibility that comes to us who participate in this promise.

[21:00] Everyone who believes. But it is also exclusive. In that it is conditioned upon true faith. It's conditioned upon believing the right things.

It's not open to believe whatever you want to believe. It is conditioned upon believing the right things about who Jesus is. Now, we saw the introduction to that in chapter 4, verse 2.

Where it says this. It says, By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

That's really kind of the introduction to now this summary statement here in chapter 5. And a couple of weeks ago, we looked at what does this faith really entail.

And if you remember, the statement that kind of carried us through the message and through the passage was, You are what you believe. You are what you believe.

[22:08] And how we describe that, we describe that in these terms. You believe something. And the way you live is an expression of what you truly believe.

The kind of faith and the kind of confession that John is aiming at and the kind of believing that God, through his son Jesus, communicated to the world, wasn't just this intellectual assent.

Jesus constantly confronted the Pharisees. And perhaps the greatest example of this is in John chapter 8. Where many in the crowd, the Pharisees in particular, were listening to Jesus.

And as a result of his teaching, they kind of applauded him and said, Yes, we believe. And John writes those words. And those who listened believe.

But then you begin to understand, as the chapter continues to unfold in John chapter 8, that their believing was just an intellectual belief.

[23:13] It wasn't the kind of belief that actually changed their heart. So that Jesus, when he goes on, says, You are of your father, the devil. If you were to really believe, you would know that I am from the father.

You would know my true origin, my true nature. Your faith is incomplete. Your faith is inadequate. Your faith is corrupted.

And so, as John continues to carry this anthem through this letter to the church of Ephesus, he wants them to understand what he means by believing is a belief that runs into action.

The kind of belief that leads to activity in your life. Because you are what you believe. So as you take an inventory of your life, and you see the things that are broken, you recognize if you take an honest evaluation of where you are, and you assess the anxieties that you feel, you take an inventory of the way that you've treated various people in your path, whether they be your coworkers, or whether they be your family members, or whether they be your neighbors, the people who God kind of creates intersection points with, and you look back on those things, and you say, Oh, whoop, I didn't really respond the way I should have responded.

The reason you didn't respond the way you should have responded is not because you messed up necessarily, but the core reason is that you believe something defective about God.

[24:57] Either that he really wasn't watching, or that he didn't really care, or that he didn't really have the power to help you respond that way, or that it didn't even really matter in the first place. Something is faulty about your faith.

And what we truly believe about God will show up in the way we live. The starting point is to know Jesus who has come in the flesh.

And what we saw, and this will flow now into our passage this morning, is the real significance of Jesus Christ coming in the flesh certainly has something to do with his humanity, but more importantly, has everything to do with what Jesus gave up to become a man, and what that expressed in terms of his posture towards humanity.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That's what Jesus came to show. That's what Jesus came to do. He came to show the love of God for humanity.

And that's why John could say a couple of verses later, is those who confess that Jesus is Lord, or that has come in the flesh, you can believe them, but the others don't believe.

[26:22] We're of the group that says that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. You can trust us, and the natural question is, well, what's the evidence? The evidence is found in verses 7 through 18.

That's what Pastor David talked about. The evidence is a person whose life has been characterized by love. That's how John distinguishes himself, as being somebody who really has the right confession, because he is not only somebody that talks about the person of Christ and his humanity, but he is somebody who bears that testimony out in his life.

He is somebody who has embraced the nature of Christ, the purpose that Christ has for the world, and who emulates or seeks to emulate that in his life.

Here we find in chapter 5, verse 1, the next step in the process is not only do they believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, but here they believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus is the Christ. You have a correct faith about who Jesus is. That Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, and that Jesus is the Christ.

[27:48] Now, when John is talking about this statement, Jesus as the Christ, what does he mean? We found in several places throughout this little letter of John that John comes back to the significance of Jesus as Christ, and I want to briefly just point out some of those things to you because we'll come back to it again next week, but I want them to just be there for your benefit as we move to the next phase in this passage.

When he says that Jesus is the Christ, first he means that Jesus is one with the Father. Jesus is one with the Father.

It speaks of his origin. It speaks of his identity. In 1 John 2, verse 22, John says, who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

He denies the Father and the Son. That Jesus' connection with the Father is so intimate that they are inseparable.

You can't have one without the other. So first we recognize that Jesus as the Christ means that Jesus is one with the Father.

[29:08] And if we had time this morning, I would take you to John chapter 5, and I would show you all of the verses from verse 19 all the way to verse 36, where Jesus emphasizes the significance of this truth.

And as a result of Jesus' connection with the Father, we find that they're one in power in verse 19, they're one in purpose in verse 20, they're one in glory in verse 23, they're one in quality in verse 26, they're one in authority in verse 30, and they're one in greatness in verse 36.

We could go also to John chapter 8, and we could go to John chapter 6, and we could go to John chapter 14. Over and over and over, Jesus wants to communicate this message that he is one with the Father.

So that when Jesus is telling his disciples in the upper room, he says, I'm going to the Father, I'm going to prepare a place for you, and Philip says, well, show us the Father, and it is enough.

And Jesus says, oh, Philip, have I been with you this long, and you still don't get it? You still don't understand, Philip.

[30:21] Believe in me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. There is this inseparable connection. Second, we understand this statement to mean that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament promise.

Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament promise. All the things that the nation of Israel was anticipating and looking forward to sometime in the future about this land and inheritance and blessing.

This seed of Abraham was encapsulated and fulfilled in the person of Christ. He is the promised one who will vanquish the nations and establish a people.

He is the hope of Israel, the future hope of security, a future lasting inheritance, a land that would never again be in jeopardy. He is the promised seed of Abraham.

Those who were of true Israel would be joined to him. He is the promised king of David, the sovereign one, the absolute sovereign king who will exercise dominance over the world.

[31:33] He is the final fulfillment of the law. The law of Christ is the final law, the law of love, the law that we now follow. He is the high priest.

As we find in 1 John 2, verse 1, He is the advocate with the Father. He is also the Lamb of God. We find in 1 John 1, 7, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus is the absolute and final fulfillment of all of the promises that Israel was putting their hope in. Third, Jesus is the only way of salvation, the only means of deliverance and cleansing for those who believe.

We see that here in chapter 5, verse 1. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Salvation and deliverance only comes through Him and by no other means.

He is the true, enduring righteousness that has been granted. He is our acceptance. He paid our debt.

[32:42] He received the sentence that was due to us. The inheritance with God is sealed in Jesus because of His work on the cross. Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Fourth, Jesus as Christ means that He is sovereign and He is Lord of all. Now this is a difficult concept for us to really get our minds around in 21st century culture where everything about us is about individuality.

Everything about us is about justice and speaking our mind. Whereas in the 1st century culture, the King was sovereign and what He said, whether you agreed with it or not, was gospel, for lack of a better word.

His subjects would follow His orders and His commands without question. We don't really understand what that's all about.

But when the scripture uses the word Jesus Christ and He talks about the lordship of God, it is referring to the work of God in terms of us surrendering and yielding our entire allegiance to Him. [34:05] Is there full surrender in your life to Christ? Is there slavery to Him? A giving up of your own priorities, your own purposes, your own dreams, and adopting the priorities and purposes that God has for your life?

Those are the four things I think John is referring to when he speaks of Jesus as the Christ. Is Jesus Christ the King for you this morning?

Is He the fulfillment of all of that is good for you? Can you say this morning, as with the psalmist, in Psalm 73, he says, there is nothing that I desire in heaven but you.

Let me read this. Psalm 73. Psalm 73. Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Is that the expression of your heart this morning?

[35:29] That Jesus Christ as King is Jesus is the object of my complete affection. That Jesus is the one to whom I give all my allegiance.

That Jesus is the one who commands my future and my destiny. That my life is meant to be lived in conformity with His commands.

Pursuing His priorities and activities for my life. So not only do we need to have the correct faith but the correct faith leads to a Christ exalting love.

This will be the last one we get to this morning and we'll pick the others up next week. A Christ exalting love. But what I want to do for you just in a moment before we get to this Christ exalting love I want you to see this unbreakable chain that one attitude one action leads to the next.

It's inseparable. It leads you from start to finish. Notice this. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. You have the correct faith.

[36:45] But then notice what it yields. And everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of Him. and now that is not what we should be seeing next.

That's not what we would expect to see next. He begins with faith but then he drops in a new word in the second part of that sentence. Everyone who believes that Jesus is Christ and then he begins to equate belief with something else in the second half of this verse.

Notice what it says. And everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been loved by Him. Begotten of Him. Those who have the right faith also have Christ exalting love.

We've spoken about what the quality of this love looks like. We'll get more to that in just a moment. But then he moves on. Christ exalting love now leads to verse 2.

By this we know we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments. What is happening here?

[38:02] Now he begins to replace love loving and obedience. So we move from Christ exalting love now to consistent obedience.

And as we move through verse 2 and move on to verse 3 we see another correlation. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

Keeping the commandments of God because of a posture of love leads us to an overcoming life. There is certain victory for you as a believer.

Certain victory. There are no ifs ands or buts about it. Everyone who has been born of God and notice again this correlation back to the beginning everyone who believes that Jesus is Christ has been born of God the same phrase we can continue to extend this correlation down those also who

have been born of God overcome the world.

It is a certainty in the Christian life for those who believe the right things about Jesus. The second part of verse four and this is the victory that has overcome the world what is it?

[39:28] What do you see? Our faith. Now we're right back to the beginning and the cycle begins all over again. There we find continuing faith faith that continues to grow and I can't wait to tell you about it.

Somehow this time went by so fast. I need to get back in the flow of pacing myself a little bit better. Let me close with an illustration.

one of the things that I have begun to appreciate is the defectiveness of my obedience. It's easy for us who have grown up in the church to go through the motions of coming at the right time serving in the right way singing the right songs praying the right prayers saying the right things knowing the right truths embracing the right principles to think that we're doing everything just the right way. But what chapter 5 verses 1 through 5 confront us with is that a true confession of God that leads to the right kind of love then leads to the right kind of action and you can't reverse the two you can't ask for the right action and expect that it's going to be commendable to God because the right action that is not driven or motivated by the right heart is not only inadequate it is absolutely corrupt so that Jesus or God tells the children of Israel in Isaiah chapter 1 we saw this too he says I hate your sacrifices

I hate your religious ceremony it is despicable to me I want a clean heart come to me demonstrate the sincerity of your love to me and then we can begin to talk about the right kind of obedience and then we can begin to see God shape us to have the right kind of victory day by day but you can't have the right love unless you have the right confession the right faith in who Jesus is if we really understood that Jesus is not willing to see the hypocrisy of life and say okay well you're going through the right motion so you must be okay we believe that Jesus is able to see the heart we believe that he is omniscient do you believe that of course you do so how do you think and how do [42:56] I think we can play games with God you see that's where our faith becomes defective because on one hand we say yes I believe in a God who is omniscient and then we go about doing our little sins as if he didn't take notice we conceal those parts of our heart and we say yes he is sovereign and lord of all but but but I'm going to be the lord of this area of my life so our expression of who God is our theology is completely out of step with our life you understand because you are what you believe and when we truly believe the right things about Jesus it will lead us into this deep intimate abiding relationship with him we will be inseparable which will lead to consistent obedience and triumph triumph not by doing disciplining yourself more to do better tomorrow that has very little if anything to do with it it is more about surrender to him than it is about disciplining yourself not that that is unimportant don't get me wrong but

I think we have the discipline part down what we don't have down is the abiding relationship part at least that's true for me but those who believe those who are born of him will overcome that's what it says so if you want to be an overcomer today it starts with the right faith it leads to the right love it carries us to consistent obedience that by the way John says and Jesus as well that it is not burdensome so if you are here this morning and you say I can't keep all the rules it's just way too hard then you don't get it you don't understand because it becomes natural and it becomes easy in a way because of the empowering work of the

Holy Spirit in your life when you're truly surrendering to his power and enjoying faith the way he has designed it to be I want to know that kind of triumph I trust you want to know that kind of triumph too so!

I'm going to close this in prayer and I'm going to invite when we sing this next song I'm going to invite anyone to come who does not know that kind of overcoming power so that we can either introduce you to Jesus or so that we can pray!

He would forgive you of your sin and you could move in the right direction let it begin today don't allow pride to get in the way of an abiding relationship with Him and overcoming life be willing to be transparent with the people in this room who love you and want to help you in this process so I'm going to pray for us I'm going to invite the team to come I'm going to encourage anyone this

morning who wants to either get on the road for the first time or stay on the road from this point on to come so we can pray for you pray with you and then you'll be dismissed!

[47:09] Let me pray! five