



1 John 5:1-12  
Encouragement: 1 John  
“Overcome”

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November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023

AKA: “The Danceaderm Sermon”

Today is our next-to-last message in this series going through 1 John, which we started back in September. So, we’ll draw it to a close next Sunday, and then start a new series for Advent in December, when we will look at some of the Christmas-related passages in the Old Testament book of Isaiah.

I will also give you a little heads up about the series that follows that one, because it is designed specifically for us to invite to church the people God has put in our lives where we live work and play...the people in our lives that we are each praying for. The series is titled, “What Might Jesus Say To...” and then fill in the blank each week with a well-known person. Each Sunday will be focused on a Scripture passage of course, but connected to a well-known person’s life. We will start the series with our Christmas eve evening service with, “What Might Jesus Say to Santa Claus.” (We close out our Advent series that morning, because Christmas eve is on a Sunday. So, two services to attend that day.)

But, before we get to that, and before we get to Isaiah, there are two more messages here in 1 John. Today we are looking at a basic element of the human experience, and that is the necessity of overcoming obstacles in life. They say that the only two sure things in life are death and taxes. I think the list is quite a bit longer of the sure things you experience in life. And one of the things we all experience are times when we have to overcome some significant obstacle, or setback, in life. Now, this can be kind of a heavy, serious topic, but before we get there, let me share a video with you that my daughter made for her bio medical class about how to overcome one obstacle in life. **Watch this...**

All joking aside...**Overcoming obstacles in life is a challenge, and it’s something we all face at some point.** A job you desperately wanted or needed but didn’t get, or the loss of a job you had; a diagnosis from the doctor that you, or your child, or another loved one, has cancer or some condition that’s going to alter life significantly from what you were

expecting; a relationship that has taken a turn in the wrong direction, the loss of a loved one, especially when the loss comes all too soon. Those are all kind of significant ones, but on a more regular basis there are things we need to overcome every day – paying bills, putting food on the table, getting your hair to look the way you want...just getting out of bed sometimes feels like a major victory, right? Reaching the top shelf in the kitchen...I know that's not an obstacle that all of you resonate with, but it is for those of us who have the obstacle of being vertically challenged.

Today's passage has something to say about this. So, let's dive into 1 John 5:1-12. We will start with the **first five verses**, then read the last seven in a few minutes. All of it is God's word to you and me today.

So, we see some themes that we've seen throughout this letter, including just the last couple weeks, when John writes about our love for God and the "children of God" which could, broadly speaking, be all people since all people are created in the image of God, and scripture tells us to love our neighbors regardless of their faith journey; but specifically here in this letter he's referring to other Jesus-followers. He says clearly in the first verse: **If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, then you are born of God (1 John 5:1 in a nutshell).** There's the key phrase: through faith in Jesus you're *born of God*. God becomes your heavenly father when you put your trust in Jesus. You are God's child. So, we love God, and we love God's children, the people of the church.

And as we've seen before, he reiterates that the way we show our love for God is by keeping his commands. This is rooted in what Jesus himself says – "if you love me, you'll keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And this is a whole life thing – not just giving of our time, our talents, and our treasure... but all of who we are. This sounds like a lot, but John says that his commands, and keeping them, are not "burdensome."

**The word for burdensome is "baroos" and it means "grievous, stern, cruel."** God's will and commands can certainly be challenging – but, not because God seeks to squash us and make us small...not because his commands are cruel...Rather, it's because they challenge our sinful, selfish

nature. His commands challenge the culture of the world around us. We live in a world that is built on a “me, me, me” worldview. Get more, achieve more, do more, excel more, acquire more...and do it all for your own glory and fame. The ability to promote oneself, and to have individual glory and fame has been amplified by an incalculable magnitude with social media. But God’s commands are not about our glory, but his. This is our aim as followers of Jesus, as children of the Lord Most High: We want to exalt our heavenly father who is King of kings and Lord of lords. And when we do that, when we live into God’s will and his commands, we thrive. We flourish. We live as God intended and created us.

So, what we see emphasized here is “believing” that Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah, (verse 1) and the Son of God (verse 5)...and notice it’s not believing *in* Jesus, like a child believes in Santa or the tooth fairy, but *believing* him to be the Christ...believing that, which is demonstrated by carrying out his commands, not just uttering some magic words of belief, leads to overcoming of the world. **He boils it down very clearly to say that if you believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, then you overcome the world.** That’s the summary of these first few verses.

And the word for overcome is “nikao”. John uses it in different forms here three times, and he’s used it two other times earlier in the letter. In 2:14, in that poetic section of the letter that you may recall, he writes, “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. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome (niako) the evil one” (1 John 2:14). Then in the fourth chapter he writes, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them [antichrists], because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

So, we overcome explicitly spiritual obstacles – like sin and temptation and false teachers who aren’t filled with the spirit of God...but also the obstacles, the pain, the sickness, the difficulties of life that come our way...and even death, because death is about our worldly body; it’s a physical death that we experience. We overcome these things. It’s not that we won’t experience

them. We will. **Jesus says that in this life we will have many troubles (John 16:33).** He never says, “Hey! Follow me for an obstacle-free life!” But he will lead us to victory over the obstacles. So, there’s a battle going on, like two football teams on the field, like two candidates vying for your vote. And in the life to come, as Revelation 21:4 puts it, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). *Eternity with Jesus is the obstacle-free experience.* Let’s pick up the passage in **verse 6 and finish it out through verse 12** and then wrap this up...

**So, here he gets into some metaphorical and spiritual imagery that has deep theological truths.** He talks about Jesus being the one who came by water and blood, and then he brings in the Spirit and says in verse 8 that all three are in agreement. And what these three things are, are the testimony God gives us of who Jesus is. When he says that God’s testimony is greater than human testimony, he’s referring to these three things. So, what does he mean that Jesus came by water and blood and that those two together with the Spirit testify to Jesus?

The reference to water is in reference to Jesus’ baptism. There’s a testimony there to who he is. Now, generally speaking, all believers are baptized and the Spirit is present in each of them. So this might raise the question of why is Jesus’ baptism a testimony of who he is? First, as a bit of an aside, if you are a believer in Jesus and you’ve never been baptized, I would invite you to take that step. Jesus set the example for us to follow and it’s one of his commands. In fact, I’m working on a one-Sunday class for early 2024 on this topic; let me know if you might be interested participating and finding out about baptism.

**For Jesus, the Holy Spirit also was on display at his baptism in a special way.** First, the Spirit alights on him like a dove, apparently in a visible kind of way that people could see. Second, a voice was heard from heaven declared “this is my son, whom I love, with whom I am well-pleased.” (All four gospels.) So, Jesus’ baptism in particular is a testimony from God the Father of who he is: his baptism has a uniqueness about it that points to him being the savior.

**The reference to blood is simply John's shorthand way of referring to Jesus' death on the cross.** John has already written earlier about Jesus' death and the sacrifice for sins that his death is. So, the cross also testifies to who Jesus is. Now, as with the water where other people get baptized (like you and me) there are others who have also been crucified as well. Unlike baptism, crucifixion does not include you and me...at least, as far as any of us know sitting here right now...but there were lots of crucifixions in Jesus' day. It was a common means of execution by the Roman Government, and they would be stunned to see us wearing them as jewelry and tattoos and displayed on shirts and hanging in our houses of worship. But Jesus' death on the cross is unique, much as his baptism is unique, because of who he is. Because of his life.

**And Jesus' life is really where the testimony of the Spirit lies, the third element here.** The testimony of the spirit is seen in the baptism and it's seen in the cross – like with the temple curtain being torn in two at his death, darkness covering the land, his resurrection on the third day after – but the Spirit's presence in Jesus' life is seen throughout his public ministry: the miracles, the lives transformed, the teaching that he gave that wasn't like the other teachers of the day as the crowds acknowledge. Jesus' whole life was the work of the spirit testifying to who he is.

So, all three are in agreement; they testify to who Jesus is. And as John says in verse 10, whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever doesn't, in essence, calls God a liar. In other words, if you don't believe in Jesus and trust in him, then you are essentially saying that Jesus wasn't telling the truth...that the blood, water, and spirit are false testimonies and Jesus is a liar. You may be familiar with C.S. Lewis' writing, that when you take a look at Jesus and investigate him, the only three possible responses are: Savior, or he's a Liar, or he's a Lunatic. John covers two of them here (Savior/Liar), and he's covered both of them earlier as well.

**All of this is culminated in a final word of testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** Without using the word, this gets us back to the theme of "overcome." Because the final culminating testimony

is Jesus' resurrection that points to this eternal life. The grave is overcome. The effects of death are defeated. Eternal life is a reality, it's the final obstacle to overcome.

So, if you're struggling with some obstacle in life – addiction, pornography, romantic escapism, depression, anger, resentment, bitterness, worry, unforgiveness, relationships gone sideways, cancer (or some other medical obstacle), divorce, loss of a loved one... whatever it is... first, don't be surprised that obstacles happen in life. **But also know that Jesus is with you and can help you overcome them.** Some may require a trained person to walk alongside you – whether that's a doctor or a counselor or a therapist... or maybe some Danceadern, I can take orders after church in the lobby. ☺

But if you acknowledge Jesus as your Lord and Savior, he will lead you to victory. He will be with you through it all. Remember, when the disciples were in the boat on lake Galilee and a huge storm whips up and they're all freaked out? Who was with them in the storm on the boat? Jesus was. He was literally in the boat when they faced that obstacle. The point of that event isn't so much that Jesus calmed the storm in that moment. It's that he was with them in the midst of the storm. Psalm 23 is another fantastic example. It proclaims loud and clear that God is present with us in the valley of the shadow of death, and even when we're at the table with our enemies; He "anoints" us in those moments, even, and our "cup overflows." We have victory over the obstacles because God is with us.

**And if you believe Jesus is the Christ (Messiah, Savior), he will be with you as well, so you can overcome whatever obstacles you face.** The obstacles will come; some may be especially difficult; many of you have experience with incredibly difficult obstacles. More will come. And with Jesus you can overcome them and flourish in this life...right on through to the ultimate victory, where all pain and loss, and other obstacles are overcome: and that's eternal life on the other side of the grave. May you know Jesus today, believing him to be the Savior – not just of the world, but of you as well, so you'd experience his power to overcome. Let's pray... Amen.