

Wearing the Victor's Crown Well

1 John #11

1 John 5:1-5

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies who will stumble and fall. One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling. He will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

“Good evening, America. This is Howard Cosell. Welcome to ABC’s Wild World of Sports. Tonight, we have a boxing match up for the ages. We’ve called it the Thrilla in Manila. It features the one who floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee. His name is Muhammad Ali. He’s matched up against the Heavy Weight Champion of the World. His name is Smokin Joe Frazier. Tonight, here in Manila, on ABC’s Wild World of Sports, one will taste the thrill of victory and the other will taste the agony of defeat.

People of God, in the sporting arena, there will always be winners and losers. There will always be those who taste the thrill of victory. And there will always be those who taste the agony of defeat. But, friends, I’m proud to report to you today that your walk with Jesus is nothing like ABC’s Wild World of Sports. Indeed, our Lord calls us to run the race. And indeed, He even beckons us to be armed, ready, and march towards for battle. But we don’t run or march in order to win. His Word teaches us we’ve already won because of the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. Consequently, it assures us, the People who belong to Jesus, that we will taste the thrill of victory and avoid the agony of defeat.

John is committed to two propositions in 1 John. The first is the proposition he argues in chapters 1-4. It is this proposition: We can be assured that we have eternal life right now. This comes by believing Jesus has come in the flesh, loving Jesus, and loving others, obeying His commands, and walking in the other direction from sin. In 1 John 5, he switches to a different proposition based on the first one. It is this one: We will overcome the world by faith in the Jesus the apostles confessed – that Jesus and only that Jesus alone. To do this, he takes the same themes in 1-4 and applies them directly to our faith. In other words, he says “You have assurance. Now live as though the victors crown is on your head.” The question, therefore, I have before you today is this one: Do you wear the victor’s crown well or do you live in the agony of defeat? John is committed to the proposition that “faith is the victory that overcomes the world.” He wants you to be also. 1 John 5:1-5 tells us how.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Wearing the Victor's Crown Well Requires We:

1. Believe Rightly (5:1a)

- **Mountain Climbers:** (1) There are two types: (a) Experienced climbers: they know all the safety precautions and insure they are in place with each step. (b) Inexperienced climbers: You can spot them a mile away because they are always pulling on the rope to make sure it will hold them before they take the first step. (2) You never know how much you really believe something until it’s truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death. Believing that Jesus is the Christ is born of God is a matter of life and death.
- **Who Can Believe:** (1) John begins v1 with a very important word that tells who can believe: “everyone.” It’s so important that it’s used three times. (2) It’s important because living as more than a conqueror, as an overcomer, and victoriously is based here on you as much as God. It’s tied to belief, confidence, and trust. But in who?
- **Who To Believe:** (1) John gives us a proper name in v1 that is the object of our belief: Jesus. The Hebrew names Joshua/Jeshua are separated only by a vowel. Both mean the Lord is our salvation. And both represent victory, overcoming, and conquering. But Joshua perished. Jesus did not. (2) How do we overcome? Belief in Jesus, the name above all names.
- **What To Believe:** (1) That Jesus is the “Christ.” The word means “Anointed One.” (2) Remember John battled against people who believed Jesus did not come in the flesh, only in spirit form (i.e., Jesus was not fully human). (3) We battle the same heresy today from the opposite perspective: people are prone to accept Jesus as fully human. But not fully divine. (4) The “Anointed One” implies both must be true.
- **Why To Believe:** (1) “Has been born of God.” Belief is our call and responsibility. But God is the one who does the new birthing. He is the source of anything and everything related to our salvation. Without it, overcoming the world isn’t possible.
- **App:** In the Book of Revelation, my favorite parts are the cries of the saints and what those cries lead to. They cry “holy.” Consequently, they overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. So, to do we. That’s how we well the victor’s crown well.

2. Love Rightly (5:1b-2)

- **Things that Go Together:** (1) Peanut Butter and Jelly; Salt and Pepper; Butter and Toast; Cereal and Milk; and Eggs and Bacon. (2) All of these go together like ramma-lamma-lamma-ka-dingity-da-dinga-dong. They are for each other like Shoo-wop-sha-whada-whadda-yippidy boom-da-boom. (3) In the Bible, belief and love are inseparable. So, to in 1 John, love and belief are inseparable. “
- **The Connection** – (1) I love the KJV’s translation of 5:1b-2a: “And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. And by this we know we love the children of God.” All three of the objects of love are connected.
- **The Love of the Father is Where It Starts** – He is the one who does the “begetting” in v1b. To beget means to bring into existence. If it is natural to love our earthly father, how much more should we love our heavenly Father?
- **The Love of the Son is Where It Continues** – He’s the one “begotten” in v1b. The Father “begot” the Son. He brought him into existence. If someone tells me they love me but don’t love my son, then they don’t love me. If we love our heavenly Father, we will love all of His children, beginning with Jesus.
- **The Love of the Children of God is Where It Extends** – The actions continue into v2. Because of the begotten(s) that have taken place in v1, we love the children of God in v2. To love one and not the other is a thought John wouldn’t have imagined. To love the Father is to love the Son and the Children of God
- **App:** Love for others is rooted and grounded in our love of God. To love your brother and sister on earth, you must love your Father in heaven.

3. Obey Rightly (2b-3)

- **Romeo and Juliet:** (1) “With love’s light wings did I o’erperch these walls. For stony limits cannot hold love out.” (2) Those are the only lines I remember from my high school play: Romeo and Juliet, the story of two partners never meant to be separated. (3) Trusting God and obeying him are never meant to be separated. (4) They are not burdens. They are blessings.
- **Obeying God’s Commands are a Blessing** – In v2 and v3, there are two words vitally important. In v2, it is the word “carry.” In v3, it is the word “keep.” In the language of the NT, the word for both “carry” and “keep” is literally “do.” We do his commands. That’s a blessing because his commands free us to love not as we want, but as we ought, and as we should. John would know. On the cross, Jesus gave him charge of his mother. He might not have wanted that. He might have. But giving Jesus his word when our Lord gave him the command was the right thing to do.
- **Obeying God’s Commands are not a Burden** – In v3, John tells us “His commands are not burdensome.” It’s a noun meaning heavy, crushing, and oppressive. The Kingdom of Israel split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah because Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, taxed the people to the gills so that he could afford his luxurious lifestyle. That’s a heavy, crushing, and oppressive burden. Jesus’ commands are the opposite. He’s not Rehoboam. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.
- **App:** God’s commands are a manifestation of His love for us. Our obedience to them is an expression of our love for him. They are only possible to keep by faith. For without faith, it is impossible to please Him and whatever is not from faith is sin.

4. Overcome Rightly (4-5)

- **Nike** – (1) In your closet, there is a pair of shoes with a trademark on them that looks like a check mark. (2) The word “Nike” wasn’t born in Oregon. It was borrowed from Greek mythology. Nike was the Greek goddess of victory. So important was victory to the ancient Greeks, that they developed a unique word for it: *nikeo*. It means to be the victor by overcoming.
- **To Be the Victor by Overcoming, Birth is Required:** In the first part of verse 4, there is a storm that brews between the words. It’s the storm of the world vs those born of God. The world is at war with the children of God. To overcome the world, you must be born of God. Jesus told Nicodemus: “flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You must be born again.” In being born again, because of the cross and resurrection, we defeat Satan, sin, and the evil system of this world with its idols, greed, immorality, and exploitation. We also defeat false teachers who oppose Christ. And we defeat all those who oppose what is good.
- **To Be the Victor by Overcoming, Faith is Required:** The phrase “this is” is important in 1 John. Last week, we saw it all over the passage: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he first loved us.” It’s John’s way of spelling out what God is after. Here he says: “This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith. The “our” is important because no one is an island. We are in this together. And faith is important because it is the substance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. When faith becomes “our” and not “my,” it cannot be defeated. It can only be victorious.
- **To Be the Victor by Overcoming, Belief is Required:** John started with believing that Jesus is the Christ in v1. Now he ends with believing Jesus is the Son of God. But he adds something that is important in v5 that he didn’t in v1: “Who is it that overcomes the world?” That makes the question an individual question geared to each one of us. Then he answers: “only the one who believes.” It is here and here alone, that victory, that *nikeo*, can be achieved.
- **App:** “To him that overcomes the foe, white raiment shall be given. Before the angels he shall know, his name confessed in heaven. Then onward from the hills of light, our hearts with love aflame. We’ll vanquish all the hosts of night, in Jesus conquering name. Faith is the Victory. Faith is the Victory. Oh, glorious victory that overcomes the world.”