

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON's SERMON 3rd September 2023 am
SERIES "You must be born again" Part 5
TEXT: 1 John 5 verses 4 & 5 TITLE: "Born for Victory"
Scripture references from the ESV

1 John 5:4-5 ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

NB for the accompanying reading, please read **1: John 2:1-17** in your Bible

The war in Ukraine started in February 2022. Initially there was overt support for the Ukrainians shown by western governments and the general public. We all felt our lives were impacted by Russia's invasion. However, 18 months on, unless we watch the news, most of us live our lives oblivious to the battle that is still raging.

It is possible to live our Christian lives in the same way, oblivious to the spiritual battle we are in.

Every person who is born on planet Earth is born into a kingdom that belongs to Satan.

- It is the kingdom of this world, where people are held captive to sin and Satan, and where eternal death reigns.

The New Birth brings us into a New Kingdom.

- It is the Kingdom of God, where people are free from sin and Satan, and where there is eternal life.

When you have two opposing kingdoms who want power over people, there is war. If you are a Christian, then you belong to God's Kingdom, and that puts you into a battle against Satan and his Kingdom.

Christians are people who are at war.

In the west, most of us live lives that are very comfortable with the result that we do not live with the awareness that we are caught up in this fierce cosmic battle. Hence, we do not often think about what it means to fight as believers.

- That failure to fight leaves us at the mercy of the world's values, Satan's cunning temptations and our own disordered hearts.

Consideration of the three forces that fight against us will help to bring the reality of the battle home to us.

- a) **Physical force, or persecution:** Why is it that people who don't follow Jesus attack those who do, when it is recorded as historical fact that followers of Jesus have done more to serve humanity than anyone else? Why do Christians get attacked for their stand on sexual ethics when other faiths with the same sexual ethics are not?
- b) **Intellectual force, or false teaching:** Almost every doctrine of the Bible that is essential for salvation has been denied or twisted in some way. That particularly applies to the person of Jesus Christ. He is the most influential figure in human history, yet his name is used as a swear word (something that would not happen to Mohammed) and the truth about his birth, physical death and bodily resurrection are denied.
- c) **Moral force, or sinful desire and pride:** This is a force that wars against our hearts, tempting us to live lives that deny what we say we believe. Despite saying we believe that we have an eternal home with Jesus, most of us use our resources as if we are going to spend eternity in this world. We say that we believe Jesus will deal justly with those who sin against us, yet we spend our energy in self-justification, telling others about the wrong done against us and constantly seeking to clear our own name.

We get beaten down by these three forces because we are in a spiritual battle.

We belong to a kingdom that is opposed by Satan and his hordes.

What hope is there for us? John writes: For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. (v4 above).

When you were born again, you were transferred into the kingdom of God and that is the Kingdom that will triumph in this cosmic war between the two kingdoms.

When you were born again, you were transferred onto the winning side.

We will have the victory because it was gained by Jesus when he died and rose again.

The Apostle Paul wrote (Col 2:15):

He (Jesus Christ) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him

Although the victory has been secured for us by Christ, that doesn't always feel like our experience now.

- We feel the pain of persecution for ourselves when people turn against us or for our brothers and sisters who live in places where being a Christian is dangerous.
- We are disturbed by false teaching which dishonours Jesus who we love, and leaves us confused and doubting
- We are grieved by our own moral failures, when sinful desires rise in us and pride stops us humbly serving others out of love for them.

How can we daily walk in the victory Jesus Christ has secured for us, especially victory over those sinful desires and the pride that goes with them? John tells us that two things are necessary: We need to be born again, and we need to have faith in Jesus Christ.

1. **Without the New Birth, we will not overcome.** In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus clearly stated that without the New Birth no one will see, let alone enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5)

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again^[b] he cannot see the kingdom of God.

...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Unless this miracle happens, you will not come under the rule of God and unless you experience the new birth, you will never get victory over the world.

- You will never find joy when you undergo persecution
- You will never be confident when confronted with false teaching
- You will never overcome sinful desire and pride

Only those who have been born again, and thus have been transferred from Satan’s kingdom into God’s kingdom, will overcome the world. Without the new birth, a person will cave in under hostile pressure, be deceived by false teaching and continue in sinful desires and pride.

When we are born again, God’s Spirit comes to dwell in us and

- He assures us of God’s love, teaches us God’s truth and leads us in God’s ways, so that we get the victory over the physical, intellectual and moral forces against us.

We need to be aware of this, because we can easily look at the world and, as we experience the forces against us, we can slip into thinking that what we need is a return to the good old days, when everyone apparently lived according to Christian morals.

We might write to our MP and bewail the decline in moral standards or take to social media and rant against the evil of our day. We can think that just teaching biblical morals will bring produce children who follow the Christian faith or a society that has Christian values.

- However, expecting people who don't have the life of God in them to live according to Christian morals is like putting the cart before the horse!

Nicodemus thought he could be morally right before God by strictly keeping to the rules, but Jesus told him that would not work.

You cannot live the life of God unless you have the life of God in you.

If we have taken time to teach our children Christian truth, but they are in rebellion against Christian faith, it is because they have not been born again. If we try to make them live the Christian life through rules and punishments, all we do is produce little Pharisees who travel the road to hell thinking they are safe.

You cannot overcome the world unless you have been born again.

That is why the early church preached and lived out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They did not try to change society by making more rules, lobbying the government or seeking to create a Christianised culture. They saw the need for radical transformation from within so

- They lived out the life of Christ in them so that people saw the reality of the new birth
- They preached Christ and the necessity for new birth
- They prayed for God to give them boldness to speak and live the gospel, and to blow by his Spirit into the hearts of people to cause them to come to new life

The commands of God will show us that we have failed to live up to his standards, but they will not transform our hearts. Without the new birth, no one will overcome the world. How will those who have been born again overcome the world?

- 2. Without faith in Jesus we will not overcome.** Only by trusting daily in Christ will we overcome the world.

What does it mean to overcome the world? John defines the world as **the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life** (1 John 2:16). The two sides of this coin constitute worldliness.

- We desire what we don't have. When someone else has that possession, position, or friendship etc, then we crave it for ourselves. The Bible calls it **covetousness**.
- We take pride in what we do have and those things make us feel we are better than others.

When we don't have what our heart craves, the world corrupts us with covetousness

When we do have what our heart craves, the world corrupts us with pride.

Covetousness and pride keep us from loving God, and loving others, but when we are born again, we gain the victory. This happens as we believe that that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 5:1) and that he is the Son of God (v5). Then we will

- Have faith in all that the gospel teaches, trusting in all that Jesus is and all that he has accomplished.

How does that help us to have victory over the world? When we are born again, we come to see Jesus as the greatest treasure that the world affords. The new birth results in faith that receives Jesus as our greatest treasure, severing the root of covetousness and pride.

- The new birth has the result of detaching us from the world and attaching us to Christ (John Stott)

Everything else will feel temporary and fleeting in comparison, when we believe that Jesus

- lived a life of perfect obedience so that we have a righteousness that commends us to God
- died to cleanse us from the sin that separates us from God
- rose to life to secure eternal resurrection life for us

We have Jesus who will satisfy us forever so we do not need to covet temporary things or boast in our achievements. In that place of freedom, we are no longer controlled by desires for all the stuff that the world values or the recognition that the world craves. That freedom leads to a life of obedience to God, which will mean loving God and loving people.

The new birth and faith in Jesus is the way to love others and to have assurance of eternal life.

a) It is the way to love others.

If material possessions or our reputation are the treasure of our heart, then we will fight those who seek to take them from us. When the new birth has caused us to see Jesus as more precious than everything in the world, and faith is at work to cause us to trust that Jesus is more precious, then we do not need to fight for the things that are passing and instead we can use all that we have to serve others, as Jesus did.

- Jesus gave up his heavenly home to come and live on earth in poverty and obscurity.
- Jesus gave up his right to be recognised, and suffered the shame of the cross and the derision of humanity.

**It was the greatest act of love the world has ever witnessed -
an act of love that has resulted in him rescuing us from our covetousness and pride.**

The new birth results in Jesus coming to dwell in us so that

- He lives his life of humility in us and through us, as we look daily to him in faith, resulting in a life of love and service for others

When we find ourselves craving material possessions and human recognition, we need to trawl our Bibles for promises that will counter the cravings and ask Christ to give us faith to believe that what is promised is better than our cravings.

Victory over the world comes from a life of everyday fellowship with Jesus.

b) It is the way to have assurance of eternal life.

Taking all this into account, we can easily feel condemned because we know that we have loved stuff and wanted human recognition more than we have loved Jesus or wanted to see him honoured. We know that we have not loved others as Jesus has loved us.

Without the new birth and faith in Jesus, our hearts will continue to condemn us.

- Once you have been born again, you come to see that Jesus lived, died and was raised to life so that you might have forgiveness and cleansing
- Faith takes hold of that which you have come to see and applies it to your heart so that we trust that what God says is true.

God's word says: **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1 John 1:9) and we trust that he means it.

God's word says: **if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world** (1 John 2:1-2). We trust his word.

Though we feel convicted that we haven't loved others as we should because of our disordered love for stuff and for human recognition, at the same time

- we can trust that Jesus did love the people we have failed to love because he is perfect and his perfect love for those people is credited to our account.
- we can trust that Jesus is our advocate in heaven, and because of that God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us.

You may feel really weak against the forces of darkness, as temptations come from the world, the flesh and the devil, but the very fact that you are aware of the fight is evidence that you are now in God's kingdom and thus on the winning side.

**As we trust, we feel the assurance that we have been born again,
we do have eternal life and we can overcome the world.**

We are born to victory.

Let us trust in Christ and especially in his promise to keep us to the end.