

## **The Incontestable Witnesses Proving Faith's Power To Overcome The World.**

Text: 1 John 5:4-10

1) The Witnesses

Suggested Hymns:

2) Their Incontestability

103, 321, 765, 330, 98

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 5:4-10, *<sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? <sup>6</sup> This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood.*

*And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. <sup>8</sup> And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*

*<sup>9</sup> If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. <sup>10</sup> He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*<sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Great things the Apostle claims for faith in these words! He says that faith in Jesus, the Son of God, overcomes the world. He claims that the true believer in Christ Jesus will not only triumph over this world of sin and walk in the commandments of the Lord, but that he will abide forever while the world passes away and the lust thereof.

He claims that the moment a person has obtained faith the victory is his. The world is conquered, and with the world all the allies of the world are subdued, so that they can do no harm.

Sin, misery, death, the devil, and hell no more have power over the believer. All these foes of our eternal welfare are in league with the world, and with the world they have been overcome. At any time the true believer can lie down to breathe his last without the least fear; for he can be sure of the fact that he will awake in a blissful eternity because his faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

It is not the historic faith, not the dead faith of the lips, which overcomes the world. Many profess the Christian faith with their lips, but by their un-Christian-like lives they plainly show that theirs is a dead faith which cannot overcome the world. The faith that overcomes the world is a product of God in the human heart.

*Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.* It is a firm reliance on the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is the joyful conviction that your sins are forgiven through the Saviour's meritorious work and that God loves you for His dear Son's sake.

However, the true believer does not always feel joyful. He is still in the world. He is assailed by the devil, by the world, and by his own flesh. At times his faith may be very weak, and he may think and fear that he has lost the faith. But his very desire to believe is a sign that he has not lost the faith, and he will pray to God, and search the Scriptures, and not rest until he is again made sure of the fact that his faith overcomes the world.

But are we not, perhaps, labouring under a delusion when we ascribe such wonderful power to faith? Can we be sure that our faith overcomes the world, and that it will lead us into a blessed hereafter? Yes, we can be positive and sure about that; for there are incontestable witnesses to prove this, and these are mentioned in our Epistle.

Let us consider *The Incontestable Witnesses Proving Faith's Power To Overcome The World*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## 1. The Witnesses

What does the Apostle say about the witnesses that prove the power of our faith, and bear evidence that our faith overcomes the world? He says, <sup>6</sup> *This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood.*

*And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.*

Look, my friends, we Christians have two times, three witnesses attesting the power of our faith to overcome the world, three witnesses in heaven and three witnesses on earth.

The three witnesses in heaven are, first, the Father and Creator who made heaven and earth; secondly, the Word, or the eternal Son of God, who has redeemed the world, and thirdly, the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us. And these three are one, one in essence, and one in their testimony.

The three witnesses on earth, are, first, the Spirit, that is, the divinely inspired Word which brings the Spirit into the human heart, the Word of the Gospel, for Christ says, *“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”*<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the water, the water of Holy Baptism, of which Peter says that *Baptism now save us.*<sup>2</sup> And thirdly, the blood, that is, the Sacrament of Christ’s true body and blood. These three witnesses on earth agree as one, says the Apostle.

They testify to the same end and purpose, and bear witness to us that we shall obtain eternal salvation through the great work of the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ came by water and blood, not by water only, as John the Baptist did, but by blood also, and shed His blood for us on the cross, and thereby fully accomplished the work of our redemption. This means that nothing more needs to be done, or in fact can be done for our redemption

The hymnist wrote,<sup>3</sup>

Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure:  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

The testimony of these witnesses in heaven and on earth is not recorded in our text, but we find it in other parts of the Scripture.

Of the first witness in heaven, of God the Father, we are told in John 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*** Is not God the Father an eternal witness, then, in heaven attesting the power of our faith that it overcomes the world?

Of the second witness in heaven, of God the Son, we are told John 11:25-26, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, being the speaker, ***“He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”*** Is not the Son of God an eternal witness, then, in heaven attesting the power of our faith that it overcomes the world, and even death itself, which is the wages of sin, and which terminates our existence in the world?

Of the third witness in heaven, of God the Holy Spirit, we are told in Romans 8:16, ***“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God of God.”*** Is not God the Holy Spirit an eternal witness, then, in heaven attesting the power of our faith that it overcomes the world and makes us children of God?

And as the Holy Scriptures call our attention to those eternal witnesses in heaven, so they also mention three witnesses on earth that testify to us, and convince us that our faith is not a delusion, but a most powerful agency within us, a power that overcomes the world.

There is the first witness on earth, the Word of the Gospel, which the Apostle calls the Spirit because it gives the Spirit. Paul says in Romans 1:16, ***<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*** The Gospel perform miracles upon the human heart, changing the hearts of people, converting them, making them new creatures who find their delight in the Saviour Jesus and seek those things that are above. The Gospel is a witness, then, on earth attesting the power of our faith to overcome the world.

There is the second witness on earth, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Paul says in Galatians 3:27, ***<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*** Baptism is the washing of regeneration, and this holy Sacrament

makes us sure of the fact that our sins have been washed away if in a true faith we receive it. Is not the water of Baptism another witness on earth, then, attesting the power of our faith that it overcomes the world?

And there is the third witness on earth, the Sacrament of the Altar. Christ says, “*Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.*”<sup>4</sup> ... *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*”<sup>5</sup> The forgiveness of our sins is sealed to us when in true faith we receive Christ’s true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine in this holy Sacrament. Is not the Lord’s Supper a witness, then, on earth attesting the power of our faith that it overcomes the world?

What more witnesses do we need than these great witnesses in heaven and on earth? Is there anything more trustworthy in heaven and on earth than the Triune God, His Word, and His Sacraments? Never doubt that your faith is the victory which overcomes the world, when not only with your own eyes you see what great things faith can accomplish, but when witnesses also testify in heaven and on earth.

## **2. Their Incontestability.**

These witnesses are incontestable. Their record is true. It cannot be disputed. This is the second part of our meditation, the incontestability of these witnesses who attest our salvation.

To overcome the world by faith, to believe that your sins are truly forgiven, that you are in God’s favour, and that you will surely be received into heaven when you must die, this is a great thing indeed.

Unbelievers do not know what to make of it when they hear Christians speak of heaven as a sure thing for them. They think that such Christians must be beside themselves. Even Christians who are ill advised and weak in the faith are often assailed by doubt as to the final outcome of their faith, and fear lest they might not persevere to the end, or lest they might not be numbered with the elect.

But praised be the Lord that for our salvation we have better witnesses than the children of this world and our own changeable heart. If we had to rely on these, we could never be made sure of heaven. But for our witness we have the Triune God in heaven, and nobody can dispute His testimony.

Scripture says in Numbers 23:19, <sup>19</sup> ***“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent.”*** The Word of God is right, and all His works are done in truth. Our text says, <sup>9</sup> ***If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.*** And the witness, or testimony, of God which He has testified of His Son is, that by faith in His beloved Son we have overcome the world, and shall have everlasting life.

Perhaps you will say, *I do not doubt that God’s testimony in heaven is true when before the angels and saints He bears record of the faith of an individual Christian. No creature in heaven or on earth can overthrow His decree when He declares that by his faith a Christian shall obtain eternal life. But who hears this witnessing of God in heaven? Nobody but the angels. What are we poor mortals benefited thereby?*

And you are right, my friend. If in heaven only, upon the throne of His divine glory, before the angels, God would bear witness of our faith that it overcomes the world, we would be ignorant of this testimony, and we would never be made sure of the fact that our faith is truly the victory that overcomes the world.

So for this very reason, namely, because we cannot hear His testimony in heaven, God has ordained three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, that is, the Word of the Gospel and the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These three witnesses on earth are the representatives of the almighty God in heaven. They declare to us what God has witnessed in heaven as to our salvation. They reveal to us the heart of God, and make known what God has decreed with regard to us.

When, therefore, the Word of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of God’s love in Christ, is proclaimed to you, it is the voice of God which you hear, and that voice says to you, *“O sinner, I am reconciled with you; only believe!”*

When any one is baptised in the name of the Triune God, God speaks to him and says, *You are my child and an heir of eternal life; only believe!*

When you receive the Holy Communion, God Himself comes to you from heaven and says, *Your sins are forgiven you; only believe!* Our text therefore says, <sup>10</sup> ***He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.*** If truly

you believe in the Son of God, that is, if you believe that Jesus Christ, God's own Son, is your Saviour, that with His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross He has redeemed you, you will be made sure of eternal life.

The Spirit of God will witness it within you, and this witness will be so strong that in the triumph of faith, even when you are under the cloud of affliction, you will defy all the enemies of your soul and say with St. Paul, *“<sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”<sup>6</sup>*

And in Romans 8:38–39, *<sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Do not say, then, my friends, that if God Himself would come down from heaven to you and say as Christ did say to the paralytic man *“**Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you**”<sup>7</sup>* then you would believe that your sins are truly forgiven, and that heaven is your eternal inheritance.

Does not God continually say the very same thing to you in His Word and Sacraments?

Come, receive these incontestable witnesses which God has ordained on earth, receive them in faith, and you will obtain the victory. You will triumph over the world, over sin and death, and finally see Jesus Christ in whom you believe sitting upon the throne of His glory and you will rejoice forever and ever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John 6:63

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 3:21

<sup>3</sup> Hymn 330

<sup>4</sup> Luke 22:19

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 26:28

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:34

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 9:2