

1 John 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Analysis

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. John introduces the theme of Christian victory. "For whatsoever is born of God" (hoti pan to gegennēmenon ek tou theou)—the perfect participle emphasizes the completed state of being born of God. The neuter gender ("whatsoever" rather than "whosoever") focuses on the principle of divine birth rather than individual persons, though the application is to persons.

"Overcometh the world" (nika ton kosmon)—present tense indicates habitual, continuous victory. Nikaō (νικάω) means to conquer, overcome, or prevail. The "world" (kosmos) is the system organized in rebellion against God, opposing believers through persecution, temptation, and false teaching. Those born of God overcome this opposition—not instantly or without struggle, but ultimately and certainly. Regeneration produces overcoming power.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (kai autē estin hē nikē hē nikēsasa ton kosmon hē pistis hēmōn). Faith is the victory that has overcome (aorist participle) and continues overcoming. Faith trusts Christ who defeated the world (John 16:33). This isn't faith in faith but faith in Christ, who overcame sin, death, Satan, and the world through His death and resurrection. United to Christ by faith, believers share His victory. When the world opposes, faith trusts Christ's promises and power, enabling us to persevere and ultimately triumph.

Historical Context

The concept of spiritual warfare and victory pervades Scripture. Old Testament Israel battled physical enemies; the church battles spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). Revelation portrays Christ and His people overcoming Satan and his forces (Revelation 12:11, 17:14). First-century Christians faced real persecution—social ostracism, economic pressure, martyrdom. John's assurance that those born of God overcome the world encouraged suffering believers.

The identification of faith as the victory echoes Pauline teaching that faith is the shield extinguishing Satan's flaming arrows (Ephesians 6:16). The Reformation slogan *sola fide* (by faith alone) recovered this truth—faith in Christ, not our works or worthiness, secures victory over sin and Satan. This isn't passive resignation but active trust that overcomes by depending on Christ's finished work rather than human strength.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What specific 'world' pressures or temptations are you currently facing, and how does faith in Christ enable you to overcome them?
2. Why is faith (trust in Christ) the means of victory rather than human effort, determination, or strategy?
3. How does knowing that your new birth guarantees ultimate victory over the world affect your response to current spiritual battles?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	πᾶν	τὸ	γεγεννημένον	ἐκ	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	νικήσασα
For	whatsoever	G3588	is born	of	G3588	God	overcometh
G3754	G3956		G1080	G1537		G2316	G3528
τὸν	κόσμον	καὶ	αὕτη	ἐστὶν	ἡ	νίκη	ἡ
G3588	the world	and	this	is	G3588	the victory	G3588
	G2889	G2532	G3778	G2076		G3529	G3528
τὸν	κόσμον	ἡ	πίστις	ἡμῶν			
G3588	the world	G3588	faith	even our			
	G2889		G4102	G2257			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 15:57 (References God): But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 4:4 (References God): Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

John 16:33 (Parallel theme): These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

1 John 3:9 (References God): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 5:5 (Faith): Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 12:11 (Parallel theme): And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 3:5 (Parallel theme): He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 2:26 (Parallel theme): And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Revelation 2:11 (Parallel theme): He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

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