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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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1 JOHN 5 v 4

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

The world has always hated Christ and Christ has always been against the world. When God, in Genesis, promised the seed of the woman, He predicted this warfare. He told the devil that he should eat the dust; always be eating dust. The dust the serpent eats is the wicked world and anyone, according to Scripture, who loves the world, is an enemy of God. Whoever lives after the world is in the way to hell. The whole of the Scripture reveals - all the histories in it show - this warfare between Christ and the world. He did not pray for the world. "I pray not for the world". "Marvel not", said He to His disciples, "if the world hate you"; ye know that it hated Me. And in the same chapter He says, "They hate Me without a cause". "If any man love not the Lord Jesus let him be Anathema Maranatha", that is, let him be accursed. A very solemn word, a trembling word, a word that may try some of us at times because, if we were questioned closely sometimes, we might not be able to say, we love the Lord. But everyone born of God loves Him; the principle is there though not always active, not always prevalent. But mind this - God give us to take notice of it - that if we are the people of God we are not, we cannot be, in the world. "What communion hath light with darkness; what fellowship is there between Christ and Belial?" - so the Word asks. If then the spirit of the world and some practices of the world and friendship of the world be ours, we are not, up to this moment, the Lord's people. Christ will have, He does make, a difference, between the living and the dead, between the world and the church, and it behoves us, as professors of the truth of God, to ask ourselves seriously, as before God, are we on the side of Christ or in the world? If we are in the world, we hate Christ. If we are in the church, we love Him, and the world will hate us. And one certain mark of being the Lord's and not in the world is that we do confess that

Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. It was not long after the establishment of gospel churches, after the resurrection of Christ, before the devil sent heresies into the churches, and among the heresies was this, that Christ was not a real Man, only had the appearance of a Man, and against this heresy the Apostle John particularly was inspired to write. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God - born of God - and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come and even now already is it in the world". Moses put a question to Israel when Israel had sinned and God was punishing them - "Who is on the Lord's side?" And that question may well be put now to us. I would put it to myself and to you professors - "Who is on the Lord's side?". And this is a certain mark; "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God", and so, is on the Lord's side. This does not mean the general confession that is made in Christendom; our national church makes this confession and yet it has thousands of popish priests in it. The modern people, the general bodies of religion in the country, they all, more or less, confess Jesus Christ. They use His Name, though they abuse Him. But when a child of God, taught of the Holy Ghost, sees the eternal Son of God taking our nature in order to be the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the Substitute; in order to make an end of sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness; then this confession is made. The Eunuch made it; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". The dying thief made it in his prayer; "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". The publican made it; "God be merciful to me a sinner", and mercy can only come through Jesus Christ. It is therefore a great point in vital religion to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. And so, we have two armies; the little army of the church, a little camp, a few feeble folk, a few men wondered at; weak in themselves; weak in knowledge, weak in faith often, but they are on the Lord's side, and against this little flock - like a flock or rather like two little flocks of kids, as the word is in the Kings - there is a multitude; a multitude against these two little flocks. O, but these little ones have God on their side. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. This is a particular believing, not general. It is this, that faith has seen Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, to be the Saviour of

the lost, the refuge in danger, the strength in weakness, the Redeemer from evil. It means that faith has seen Him as the Prophet to teach, the Priest to atone, the King to rule, and that does bring forth the confession: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God".

And so we have these two things, two parties, two armies. The Church on Christ's side, His subjects, His people, His dependants, His beggars, His ragged creatures coming to Him and being on His side; His dependants, and on the other side, the world. A great world, a flourishing world, a dark world, a world of darkness and death, and these two will never agree. The religious world is now at one with the profane world; theatres, whist drives, all kinds of amusements and merriment and fun, and religious people thank God publicly, thank God for merriment and fun. That is the world, set against Christ. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world". Your new born souls, born of God, will overcome the world and faith is the instrument. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God". May the Lord help me for a short time to look at the conflict. No victory without a battle; no overcoming without opposition. When one is born again his back is turned to the world; his face is turned toward God. He professes himself to be a pilgrim and a stranger; he is seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The way is rough; he needs, and he has a promise of, shoes of iron and brass; he must go through much tribulation, not necessarily in circumstances always, but always a conflict between that sink of iniquity, that unfathomable heart of wickedness - deceitful above all things and desperately wicked - between that heart and the grace of God given to him. That heart is like the troubled sea that cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt and every child of God, more or less distinctly, knows what that means. I do not say that that is what the Holy Ghost makes in that particular text, but I do say that every child of God has that restless sin, that restless desire for evil, that restless feeling that he can do this or would do that, that rebellion against trouble, that opposition to godliness, so that he says, I am a poor, restless wretch, a vagabond, a sinner lost, entirely lost. And against all this sin there is a principle of divine life in him. He is a partaker of the divine

nature, so Peter says. And this principle of divine life, this divine nature, cannot consent to the wickedness that is in the soul; that wicked heart. You know what I am saying is true, those of you who fear God, and have His life in you; you know that you cannot consent to it. That holy principle says, God forbid that I should do this wickedness and sin against God. That principle hungers for God, that living soul wants a habitation, seeks a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and you will never get these two to agree. If the flesh is up the spirit is down. If grace is triumphant the flesh is under foot; they will never agree. Hart speaks wisely when he exhorts us to "patch up no inglorious peace". If you are at peace with sin, O child of God, you are distant from the Lord. If you are at peace with sin you are in opposition to holiness. If you are at peace with any known sin, any lust in your nature, then you are distant, and you are dark, and you are foolish, and you are preparing a rod for your back. These two principles are like life and death, light and darkness, holiness and pollution, and you cannot make them one. You can, by certain processes, I understand, make oil and water one; in some particular way you can do it, but they are different in their natures, and in vital religion there is no chemistry can do it. Life, on the one hand; death, on the other. Holiness, on the one hand and filth, the filth of sin on the other. Therefore, every child of God has a conflict. He is seeking a city and the flesh says there is one good enough here. He seeks communion with God and the flesh opposes it. He seeks to be in Christ and the flesh, in its pride, says we do not want Him. O, the opposition; it will wear you out sometimes. It will tire you, and tear you, and trouble you and confuse you, and make you wonder where you are and what you are. Yet, born of God, you are an overcomer and this overcoming is not kept to the day of death. It is an understanding, at times, of a child of God; he says, I have overcome that. You know I am speaking the truth, those of you who have this conflict; there is a rest sometimes. A man of God said, as we have it: "Return unto thy rest O my soul for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". David overcame the world when Shimei cursed him. This was his overcoming - "Let him alone", said David to his friends who would soon have cut off the head of that dead dog, as it was spoken. "Let him alone, the Lord has bidden him curse". That was an overcoming. David overcame, blessedly overcame; fell into the hands of God, left himself there; cared for God, cared

for the honour of God. On another occasion, the very last time that king Saul went after him, Saul encamped, and on a night he laid himself down to sleep; he had water at his side and his spear and around him were his soldiers, and David knew it. God caused a deep sleep to fall on that army and David and one of his men went down to Saul and David's servant said now God has put your enemy in your hand, let me smite him; I wont smite him twice. And David said, No; he overcame the world; he was a victor. Now have you not had some troubles, difficulties, temptations, sorrows, afflictions, and nature in you has said, this is not right. Why am I troubled like this? Rebellion has risen; you may have felt just as Jonah did - "Doest thou well to be angry?" " I do" - so nature spoke. Some of you may have been very wicked in your rebellion; I was once; when the Lord told me to do something, I said I will not, but I became a victor; grace reigned. You have had victory, have you not, when a touch of divine grace, the finger of God, the love of God, the rebuke of God, the word of God you have had given to you and you have fallen flat before Him and said "Pardon mine iniquity". You have overcome; the new birth, the new child in your soul has overcome the old man. That has been verified in you - "The elder shall serve the younger". "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last".

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" If we are wise people we shall expect, look out for, the opposition, the hatred of the world against the living principle in our souls. I say again, the world hates Christ, and it hates His people.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". This is the instrument; faith is the instrument that God uses to bring victory. Let us as helped just a little look at this. Faith in the bleeding Lamb, faith in the holy Son of God, faith in His substitutionary work, faith in the promises of Christ, faith in that word: "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Now faith in these respects lives and labours under load. Everything in us comes against Christ in some particular. If we are deeply convinced of sin, if we look at our sins, and find that they are more than can be numbered, they are black as the confines of hell, they are powerful to overcome us as Samson was overcome, we are ready to sink, ready to give up. We set them up, as it were, against the Lord, against His

precious blood. Now what will faith do? Faith will always have a say in matters of this kind; faith is on the side of Christ; faith magnifies His death; faith believes in the infinite value and merit of the death of Christ, in the virtue of Christ's blood. And what will that do? It will take you to Him; it will plead His blood before God; it will cause you to cast yourself, with all your sin and guilt and pollution, without reservation on the illimitable ocean of Christ's merit and love. That is victory. God bruises the Satan of unbelief under your feet; He makes good that word in Isaiah. "The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy". Tread what down? "The lofty city, the lofty city, He layeth it low; He layeth it low even to the ground. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy." A poor believer, who says, I am but a worm, I have no strength left, he lives to prove that the weaker he is in all these things that trouble him, the better. The weakest soul prays best. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith".

Our nature loves ease; we should very soon rest if God allowed us; we should soon be in bad places, resting short of God, if He left us, but there is a word which, though dreadful to nature, has an attraction to faith. Your faith, O believer, would not like to be against Christ and would never be so. Now this is the word: He said "In the world ye shall have tribulation". A solemn word; tribulation, separating the chaff from the wheat; that is what it means. Tribulation. Now faith says, by the help of God I will go this troubled way; I will follow the Lord. "His way is in the sea; His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known", but as I see Him by faith I will follow Him and I will trust Him in the dark. That is what faith does sometimes; I will trust Him in the dark. The footsteps of the flock are all this way; if you follow Christ you will follow with His people, as Paul said to the Thessalonians - You became followers of us and of the Lord. Did Christ suffer? Was His path rough? Were His troubles dreadful? and shall a poor child of God say, I will have ease and rest anyhow? No, his faith says

His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view

Faith overcomes the world.

Faith is a seeker. Abraham had this faith; he sought a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. O, what he must have seen; what views God gave him of this poor, perishing world; not a place in it for the soul to rest in, not a place. An empty place, and God turns it upside down as a man turneth a dish upside down which he washes; so the world is made an empty place to the people of God; they cannot build here. A wise builder digs deep till the sand is removed and he reaches the rock; a child of God seeks this rock. There is the city of God; God the builder and there is real rest. Whenever faith reaches this there is a rest and until this is reached the seeker says: "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest". Have not some of you been made overcomers? I said at the beginning, and I repeat it, this overcoming is not reserved till the last day of our life. Infidelity in us is overcome by faith; rebellion is overcome by resignation and an attempt to rest here is overcome by a seeking spirit seeking the rest that remaineth to the people of God.

Overcome? Christ said a wonderful word; in this gospel it is recorded. "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven", and that sight, in some measure, is given to every believer at times. He sees the power of God casting down the devil, bruising him under the foot. There are degrees of that bruising; there are different times of that bruising. Some here - you have been pilgrims for many years - have had that bruising occasionally; have you not? When the devil has roared like a lion, threatening to devour you, and you have been enabled to say: In the Name of the Lord I will destroy him. He has been bruised under your feet. Sometimes it has been as if a great army came against you and just a little faith has risen and grown and you have understood something of that word: The walls of Jericho fell down at the sound of the trumpet and the breaking of the pitcher, and the bright shining of the lamps. Faith has held forth that blessed gospel and the enemy has been bruised.

Love overcomes. The love of the world is in us; I know that painfully, the love of the world. O, but if any man love the world, he is an enemy of God. And that, the very thought of being an enemy of

God, makes a child of God tremble. O, but this love of the world; it is extinguishable in us. You cannot extinguish it yourself; only God can manage it, and He gives faith, and faith says, this world, it can afford me no solid satisfaction. The best it can give is just a passing thing. Painted tinsel, painted joys, painted promises; all painted, nothing real; only like a vapour. And faith goes to that blessed One who has heaven and earth at His command and who says: This is your resting place; "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" Whenever you are enabled to rest in God you are an overcomer. The final victory is yet to be had, but these overcomings are from time to time experienced by those whose faith runs to God, flees unto Him to hide the soul, flees unto His promise, flees unto Him as a refuge and strength. All that experience is really overcoming. My dear friends, here is the truth. You cannot make the world on the side of God. The world in you and the world without you both will alike be against God and fight against your soul's best interests and comforts and good; and faith God gives as an instrument to say this: I will patch up no inglorious peace, but Christ, my Lord, suffering, I will follow Him. And this is carried on in secret; the warfare is carried on in secret. On your knees you get victories. Many, many victories have been obtained in that way. Look at what you have in the Hebrews; O, what the pilgrims suffered, but they overcame and they would not accept deliverance. They were persecuted, and one form of persecution was this - If you will abjure, if you will turn away from, if you will blaspheme, Christ, you shall have liberty. Paul tried, when he was Saul of Tarsus, he tried many saints that way but we read in the Hebrews - Not accepting the deliverance; that they would die rather, that they might obtain a better resurrection. They overcame, and so the people of God will find that. Look for this, look for conflict. And here is what may sometimes greatly perplex us, namely that the more grace we have, the more conflict we must have. The nearer you are to God, the more trouble you will have because Satan, and the devil in you of unbelief and wickedness, will envy you that and strive to overcome you, to spoil your joys, and rob you of your feasts and so, when you are lively, blessed with favour from on high, seeking God and communion with Him, then the enemy will come and tear you if he can, tear you away from your knees sometimes - I know that - O, but the conflict is worth it all. The best is to come. There is a great word in the Revelation which has been an attraction to me

more than once - "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth". What is it to keep the word of His patience? To hold fast to Christ, to cleave to His gospel, to possess your soul in patience, to look to Him to be supplied with all that you need. Cleaving to Him and despising your own life and losing it and hating it, then you will find it. What is it? "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God". The sinner who says, I believe in that Person, God and Man, and my soul cleaves to Him in affection. I go to Him; with trembling I go to Him; with fear and in weakness I go to Him; in my afflictions I go to Him; In my troubles, even though I fret, I go to Him. This is the victory; victory over doubt and fear and rebellion and flesh and blood; victory over all your foes. Sometimes the child of God sees the devil fleeing, fleeing from him. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". That is the victory. He comes again; he left Christ only for a season and if he leaves you for a day or two he will come again but faith will stand the test; live and labour under load; though damped, it will never die, but get the victory. How do you stand? What are your thoughts? What is your feeling? What is your hope? What is your labour? O, says faith I want God; I hunger for God; I thirst for God. I want manifestations of His mercy and love to my soul. I want to be persuaded that He is mine and I am His. And when you get that persuasion you say, now I know in whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. May the Lord help us to fight. "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold of eternal life whereunto thou art also called".

AMEN.