

# I Have Overcome

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of overcoming the world, a system of lust and pride, and encourages believers to have faith in Christ and to know what to overcome in order to experience rest and fullness of joy.*

**Scripture:** John 8:23, John 16:33, 1 Timothy 1:4, 1 John 2:15, 1 John 5:5

**Topics:** "Overcoming The World", "Faith In Christ"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the necessity for believers to overcome the antagonistic world system through faith in Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the dangers of being indifferent and the importance of being overcomers rather than being overcome by the world. The sermon delves into the distinctions between the world as a place, the people in it, and the moral world that believers are called to overcome, focusing on the lust and pride that characterize the world system. Through examples from Judaism and Christendom, the preacher highlights the need for believers to be vigilant in overcoming worldly influences and to find rest and joy in the Son of God.

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## Transcript

Those who believe on the Son of God have something to overcome. Eternal life is theirs through faith in Him and they can never perish, but there is that which is antagonistic, and it is dangerous to be indifferent in regard to the matter, lest we be overcome instead of being overcomers. In various forms, the Holy Spirit shows us in Scripture, it is the world which has to be overcome.

We have not to look far to see many being overcome by the world, but we may seek rather to learn of the Son how we may be preserved, and in soul-rest with rejoicing, overcome with triumph, notwithstanding the subtle snares of the world-system. The Lord Jesus said, "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

We must be careful not to mistake what is to be overcome, namely, the world in its moral or immoral character and nature. There is (1) the world as a place, (2) the people in it, (3) the moral world of which we have spoken. As regards the first it is said, "The world was made by Him" and "I came into the world." The world in this sense is the earth which is "the Lord's and the fullness thereof," which, when He returns (after taking the assembly up from earth to heaven to be with Himself) He will fill with glory as the waters cover the sea. The second is the people in the world rather than the place, and, it is said God gave His Son in view of their eternal blessedness--"God so loved the world." God sent His Son "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Nevertheless, the world (i.e. the people) knew Him not.

It is not therefore (1) the place, or (2) the people, but rather (3) the moral system which is to be overcome. This is important since well-known religious leaders teach that the world, which the Lord warns us of, is only that portion of it where the faith is not owned. The inspired writings however emphasize the very opposite; and it is said especially to the strong, who have overcome the wicked one, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). The third therefore is a permeating system of "lust" and "pride," which spreads everywhere in the race of fallen Adam, showing the nature and character of sin in its diverse subtleties. Thank God, it has been overcome, and it may still be overcome.

## THE WORLD IN JUDAISM

Fulfilling the long-foretold coming of the Messiah to suffer, the Lord Jesus appeared primarily to Israel, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Judaism rejected and crucified Him. Its character and nature were thus exposed. He was "meek and lowly;" lust and pride had captured the Jews' religion. To its then leaders the Son of God said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). The world had overcome the place and people where profession of the true God was made. Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, ye would love Me . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." What a condition for those to be in who said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man!" This shows how the world deceives its votaries.

The Lord Jesus perceived its snares, and, amidst the Judaism of that day, He found pleasure in always doing what pleased the Father. He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28). The Son of God found in that fallen dignitary, Satan, His great antagonist; the Father and the Father's love found the world in opposition; and the Holy Spirit the flesh. We are told that Satan--the prince or "ruler of this world"--is judged (v. 11); nevertheless, as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) he blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving that "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them." In both a governmental and religious way therefore his activities have the world in view. The Son of God however has brought about his just overthrow, and has also overcome the world in every form. He has kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love through every trial, yet the world hated Him. They crucified the Lord of Glory. That exposed the awful condition of Judaism. There is however for faith another side to the Saviour's death--to His going away from the world to the Father--even as He said, "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

When Jesus said, "I leave the world and go to the Father" (John 16:28), the disciples--to whom He had spoken of the Father's love--and in whom desires had been awakened as to the Father--replied, "Now we are sure that Thou knowest all things." That was true, and He forewarned them of the trials which awaited them, adding, "These things I have spoken unto you, that IN ME ye might have peace." Therefore they were not to be despondent, but to rejoice. In John 17, the words are recorded by the Holy Spirit, which they were allowed to hear Him speak to the Father, that they might have His own joy fulfilled in themselves. Twice they heard Him say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (vv. 14-16); and in one form or another the world is mentioned in the Lord's prayer not less than eighteen times!

The Lord Jesus had called His loved disciples out of Judaism, and out of the world which characterized it, for He said to the Father, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (v. 6); but dark and dense indeed was its ignorance of God, even if the disciples' divinely imparted knowledge was superlatively blessed. This is shown in verses 25 and 26 (N.Tr.), "RIGHTEOUS FATHER--and the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known to them Thy Name, and will make it known; that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them." Herein lies the secret, not simply of overcoming the world, but of being preserved in fullness of joy and blessing apart from its lust and pride, whether in Judaism or elsewhere.

## THE WORLD IN CHRISTENDOM

Now if our Lord Jesus Christ came to Israel, He likewise came from the Father in view of all nations. The Roman empire came immediately into responsible contact with the Son of God (for it held imperial rights even over the nation of Israel) as we see in the governor Pilate. Jesus "was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." He was "the Lord of glory" whom none of the princes of this age knew; and, having been handed over by the Jewish leaders, to the Gentile governor, they united in crucifying Him, though Pilate emphasized the guilt of this action by declaring that Jesus was faultless. After the actual resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and after His bodily ascension to the Father's throne, the Spirit was sent in His Name to proclaim forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for all who believe--thus calling them out to be the assembly. This was divinely initiated by various acts of power from God which introduced "God's dispensation which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:4, N.Tr.).

We read often of "the faith" in the New Testament: it was delivered once and for all by God to the saints, with unimpeachable witness, needing neither repetition nor continuation. The inspired writings abundantly show this. We have spoken above of "CHRISTENDOM," not indeed as rightly representing "the faith" which is true and real, but as that great sphere which is marked by the outward profession of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet is permeated by the world-system that has to be overcome. Here again the words of the Son of God come for our encouragement--"Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

We have seen the way He victoriously overcame in the midst of defiled Judaism, and though we are called to overcome in the midst of corrupt Christendom, it is the same moral or immoral world of lust and pride that has been largely dominant in both. The church, or, more correctly, the assembly, is apart from the world, but both the teaching of Scripture and actual fact show the rise and spread of worldly influences in the assemblies as early as the apostolic days. Indeed, in the symbolic and prophetic history of the assemblies, recorded for us in Revelation 2 and 3, we see the departure from first love at Ephesus, the first of the seven, ending at Laodicea, which has become so blind, shameless, self-satisfied, in a Christless profession of worldly religion, that the Faithful and True Witness stands outside the door knocking, before He spues it out of His mouth (3:16). When this state of things prevails--even as it does today--a Voice is heard saying, "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also overcame, and have sat down with My Father in His throne" (v. 21). The One who speaks here in regard to Christendom is the same who said in the midst of Judaism, "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

We see in the epistle to the Galatians that it was the Judaistic form of worldly-religion which endangered the Spirit's work of grace among them. They were therefore reminded in chapter 1:4, that our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world according to the

will of our God and Father." Again the apostle says to them, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (6:14). In 2 Timothy 3 we are told on the other hand of heathen characteristics prospering in Christendom, similar to those described at the end of Romans 1. Because of this, times of peculiar difficulty obtain. This is to be 'known' by us. Self-love and money-love head the list of these ungodly traits, and while love for what is good disappears, love of pleasures instead of love for God becomes rife. In both lists the beautiful natural affections (which are nourished and developed where God's love is known) not only become withered, but are altogether lost (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). Moreover, disobedience to parents, boasting and slander also mark both; yet, awful to contemplate, when "lovers of pleasures" complete Christendom's list, rather than Heathendom's, we are told, they will have "a form of piety," from whom those who remain loyal to their rejected Lord are to "turn away."

Overcomers are to "know" what is to be overcome. Being forewarned they are also forearmed! Let this stimulate faith in Him who foretold us all before it came to pass, because His fore-knowledge was perfect. Let this cheer us in the One who told us to be of good courage, for He Himself has overcome. He educates His own today to be overcomers. He also shows us where true rest is found, and fullness of joy also, for the overcoming is a prelude to the in-filling, the conflict of faith to rest divine, the victory over opposition to rejoicing in the Son of God, to delight in the riches of the Father's love.

"Brought to rest within the circle,

Where love's treasures are displayed.

There we drink the living waters,

Taste the joys that never fade."

Overcoming is, as we have seen, a necessity, because of the antagonism which at all times exists against what is of faith. Furthermore, overcoming is not in itself the final object in view, but rather something beyond the victory in a severe battle is followed by honour and rejoicing, the labours of the toiler yield pleasant fruits afterwards, and the crossings of difficult mountains and raging torrents bring the traveller home to rest and joy. "Who is He that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5, N.Tr.).

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