

Faith That Does Not Overcome The World

Franklin Church of Christ
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December 19, 2004
AM Worship

Introduction:

We have read **I John 5:4**. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” We sing the song based on this verse—“Faith is the Victory.” But what is the faith that overcomes the world? During this lesson, I want us to answer this question by looking at a contrast. There are several passages in the New Testament that describe faith that does not overcome the world. By examining those passages, I believe we can see the faith for which we should be striving.

Discussion:

- I. A small faith will not overcome the world.
 - A. Four times in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus spoke against having a little faith (**Matthew 6:30, 8:26; 14:31; 16:8**). By comparing these passages, we can see that the small faith was an unapplied faith. It was a faith that believed in God, but did not really believe God. It was a faith that acknowledged intellectually the aspects of God and His power, but did not trust God at a gut level, the level at which we decide how to live when under stress. Consider **Matthew 14:31**. Peter could see Jesus’ power to walk on water. In **Matthew 8**, Peter had witnessed Jesus’ power to command the wind and the waves. His faith was strong enough to step out of the boat. But in the middle of the storm, his intellectual acknowledgements did not translate into gut level surrender to the Lord. While I agree that we should not be so hard on Peter, because we may not have even gone as far as he did, I also note that if Jesus rebuked him, he deserved rebuke. And if we would not even go as far as he did, we deserve a greater rebuke.
 - B. We need to have a large faith that applies our faith to our daily lives, because the small faith will not overcome the world. Consider the passage in **Matthew 6:25-30**. Too many Christians spend their time worrying and fretting over money and their financial future. Christians must be good stewards and that does mean considering their financial future. But, too many Christians live as though their eternal security is bound up in the stock market. We all believe God *can* take care of us, but do we really believe He *will*. A large faith is one that lives God’s teaching. If God says it works this way, then it does and that is how I will choose to live. How large is your faith?
- II. A silent faith will not overcome the world.
 - A. In **John 12:42-43**, we read of ruling Jews who believed in Jesus. However, they would never vocalize that faith. They did not want to be ostracized from people. They wanted people to like them and speak well of them. They knew if they stated what they really believed they would be cast out. So they kept quiet. Jesus pointed out how useless a silent faith is in **Matthew 10:32-33**. Our faith must be confessed and vocalized before men, otherwise Christ will deny us.
 - B. We need to have a vocal faith as illustrated by Paul in **II Corinthians 4:13**—“we also believe and therefore speak.” Too many Christians are like the Jewish rulers. They do not want to be ostracized for their beliefs, so they keep them quiet. “Folks will think we are crazy if we tell them what we believe.” “Folks won’t like us ...” “Folks won’t be my friends ...” The problem is, if we do not tell them what we believe, then Jesus will deny us in the judgment. A silent faith will not help us at all. How vocal is your faith?
- III. A lazy faith will not overcome the world.
 - A. In **James 2:17**, James wrote, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Of course, we recognize we cannot be saved by some kind of mental assent to God as the demons have (**James 2:19**). We can only be saved by obeying God. Too many people today believe they are saved simply because they believe in Jesus.
 - B. We need to have a working faith as demonstrated by Abraham in **James 2:21-23**. Too many Christians are willing to view this as just a baptism passage. We got baptized so we have a working faith. And yet, too many Christians still have a lazy faith. They will obey some things that God says, but they do not obey everything. Too many Christians are willing to only go so far. They were baptized, but stop short regarding assembling, giving, keeping their hearts and minds pure from evil communications, getting the gospel out, etc. We need to have a working faith that obeys every command of Jesus. How hard does your faith work?

IV. A neglected faith will not overcome the world.

- A. In **Matthew 23:23**, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because, while they were very particular about keeping some aspects of the Law, they neglected the weightier matters of the Law like justice, mercy and faith. This is really amazing. How could this be? Religion was a set of rituals. The most important thing to them was to make sure they went through the rituals properly. But even their obedience in minor rituals was not about serving God, it was just about looking good to others. It was about maintaining a face of spirituality that made people look up to them.
- B. We need to have a faith that is real and focused as illustrated by Jesus' description of worship in **John 4:24**. He pointed out that we serve God in spirit and truth. That is, we must do what God says, the way He says it. But it is not just going through the motions. It is true devotion from the heart. A neglected faith is a great danger for those who have been brought up in the church. They learn from their parents how we are supposed to do things. They spend their lives going through the motions. But they never get into the book and have a real faith based on hearing the word of God. No wonder that many of these fall away when they leave home because they no line of defense. They have neglected faith and simply done what they saw at church growing up. How focused is your faith?

V. A misplaced faith will not overcome the world.

- A. In **I Corinthians 2:4-5**, Paul claimed that he did not come to the Corinthians with persuasive words of human wisdom. Rather, his preaching was a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Why? He did not want the Christians to misplace their faith in man's wisdom and reasoning. The Corinthians were well acquainted with the ways of human philosophy. The teachers of wisdom developed their followings based on their ability to sound good. But Paul knew if the people's faith was simply based on his being the best or most persuasive speaker, it would falter when a better orator came along. A misplaced faith would not overcome the world.
- B. We need to have a faith that is properly placed in God's word as Paul spoke of in **Romans 10:17**—"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Too many Christians have their faith in parents, peers or preachers. Too many have a faith that is tossed about by every wind of doctrine because they will accept what anyone who sounds good says. Their faith is not anchored in God's word. We must not believe because we like the preacher. We must not believe because we like what a church has to offer. We must believe because we have found it in the word of God. Any other faith is misplaced. Keep in mind that when Paul says he came with a demonstration of the Spirit and power, he is not speaking only of miraculous power. Rather, he is speaking of the power of God which is found in Christ's gospel, not in man's wisdom (**Romans 1:16-17**). Where is your faith placed?

VI. A vain faith will not overcome the world.

- A. In **I Corinthians 15:2**, Paul warned the Corinthians against believing in vain. The context is quite clear. The Corinthians would have believed in vain, if they stopped believing. This should forever lay to rest the notions of once saved, always saved that claim a moment of faith causes an unending salvation. If Christians stop believing, their belief did them absolutely no good.
- B. We need a worthwhile faith, an unending faith, as Jesus pointed out in **Luke 18:8**. Jesus expressed concern that when He came in judgment, He would not find faith on the earth. Jesus wants us to be patient and steadfast, unmoved by what is going on around us. Too many Christians have an impatient, vain faith. Things are not going smoothly in their lives, so they get mad at God and turn from Him. They find some things hard to understand (cf. **II Peter 3:16**), so they decide to give up, believing God must not be real. The reward for serving God does not come quickly enough, so they turn to the immediate gratification of sin. But we need to be steadfast and grounded in our faith, continuing and persevering, looking forward to the reward as Paul described in **Philippians 3:12-14**. How worthwhile is your faith?

VII. A partial faith will not overcome the world.

- A. By partial, I do not mean in part as opposed to the whole thing. Rather, I am referring to **James 2:1**. James wrote that we must not "hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ ... with partiality." He goes on to speak against the prejudice early Christians may have had toward those who were

wealthy. Our faith determines our relationship with others as well as our relationship with God. A faith that produces partiality will never overcome the world.

- B. We need an impartial faith as James described in **James 3:17-18**. The wisdom that is from above is without partiality. We should not be partial when it comes to dealing with other Christians (**Romans 12:16**). Nor should we be partial when it comes to people we hope to teach and convert to Christianity (**I Corinthians 9:19-22**). Too many Christians are partial with their faith. They prejudge who will listen and who will not. They look down on people who do not look the same. Maybe they wear different clothes or different hairstyles. Perhaps they are of a different color. Maybe they are of a different economic class. Perhaps they are clearly sinful, clearly alcoholics, adulterers or even homosexuals. Whatever the case, Christians look at them and prejudge whether or not they will listen. Some Christians are even partial when it comes to other Christians. Face it, if you are active in evangelism you are going to have babes in Christ. Babes in Christ have problems. Babes in Christ present work. I have heard stories of preachers asking where brethren come up with these people they are converting. I have heard stories of elders jumping on preachers for converting people who make them have to work. This is partiality and should not be among us. Is your faith impartial?

Conclusion:

As we close our look at faith, we must all examine ourselves. What kind of faith do we have? Will it overcome the world or not? Do not be afraid of this examination. It is the one that **II Peter 1:5-11** encourages us to make, being diligent to make your call and election sure. You begin with faith, but that faith is to increase and abound. You are to add to that faith. Never be satisfied with where your faith is. Always examine and see how you may grow in faith and overcome the world through Christ.