

SESSION 4

SURE OF VICTORY

Leader pages on pp. 116-119

THE POINT:

BECAUSE JESUS HAS WON THE VICTORY, HIS PEOPLE ARE VICTORIOUS.

1 JOHN 3:19–4:4

¹⁹ This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight.

.....
²³ Now this is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he commanded us.

²⁴ The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him. And the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us.

.....
^{4:1} Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² **This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.** This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Before him (v. 9) – This phrase refers to God's observation of our lives.

His command and believe in ... Jesus Christ (v. 23) – These are not different things, but two aspects of a single, undivided love of God.

Spirit that does not confess Jesus (4:3) – These words show that John was aware of people speaking by the power of spirits other than the Holy Spirit.

HOW ARE WE VICTORIOUS BECAUSE OF CHRIST?

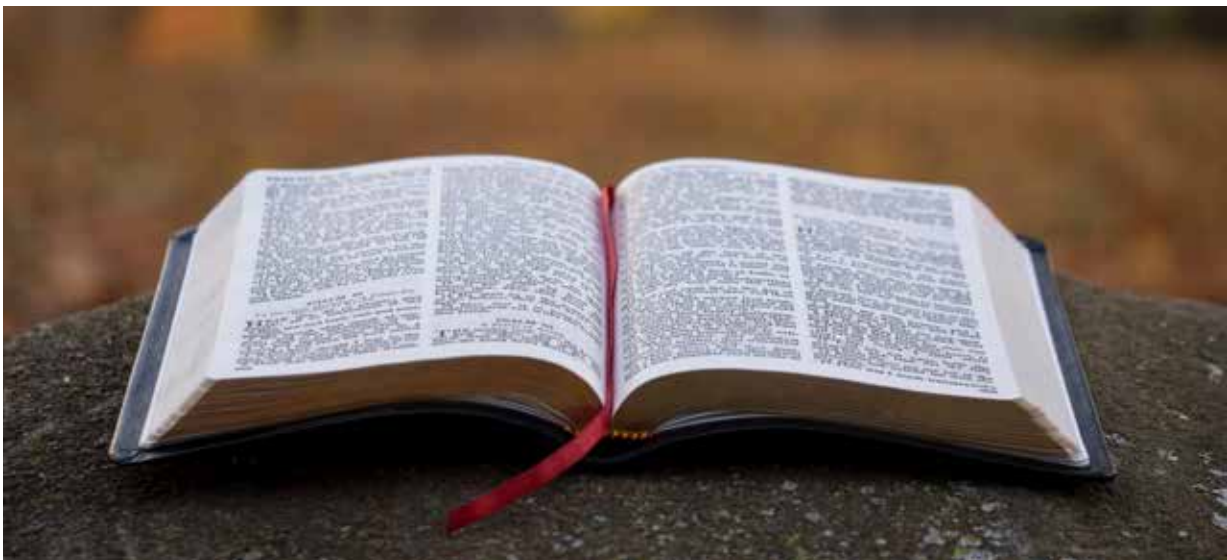
When I was a little boy, my uncles raised cattle. I can remember sitting on the tailgate of the old farm truck watching two of their bulls fighting. They seemed mismatched since one was a young bull and the other was old. The younger bull may have been quicker, but the older bull was bigger. After pawing the ground and throwing dirt in the air, the two bulls put their heads together and began to shove. Most of the time, the older bull won, but the younger bull would get the best of him on a few occasions.

When I look at the current condition of our world, I see a similar picture of righteousness fighting against wickedness. There is a constant shoving match between the two. If you draw your information solely from the news media, then darkness seems to be winning. But when you read the Bible, you discover the opposite is true. Darkness may seem to be winning, but it has already been defeated. Jesus has won the victory, and His followers are on the winning side. We have the ultimate “comeback story” because of Jesus!

Victory over Doubt // 1 John 3:19-22

In the previous verses, John has been teaching on our responsibility to love one another. Love is proof of genuine salvation (see 1 John 3:14), which in turn assures our hearts before God. Sadly, we have times in our lives when we don't love as we should. When this happens, a sense of failure can set into our minds causing us to feel condemned before God, which in turn can fill us with doubt. Such doubt can be debilitating at times and render us unable to move forward.

Apparently, John's readers were struggling with doubt. For this reason, John wrote to reassure their hearts: “before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things” (vv. 19-20). Praise be unto God! He looks beyond our failures to the true intent of the heart. We can wrongly see ourselves through the lens of self-condemnation, but God sees us through Christ's righteousness. (See 2 Cor. 5:21). It is good to know that when we trust the finished



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work of Christ, “there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Because of Christ, we can walk in victory over doubt. This confidence allows us to pray with boldness in accordance with God’s will. (See 1 John 5:14). Think about it this way: When we abide faithfully in Christ, assurance blooms within us, which allows us to pray in faith according to God’s will. Prayer, in this way, carries a promise: “Dear friends, if our hearts don’t condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight” (vv. 21-22).

Of course, the promise is conditional: “We keep his commands.” God takes great pleasure in answering prayers that are offered from an obedient heart. This “is pleasing in his sight.”

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THE TRUTHS IN THESE VERSES WHEN WE DOUBT?

Recently, one of my sons worked hard to raise money to purchase a used car. I was proud of him, so when he asked if I would pay the remaining amount for the car’s purchase, I was glad to do so. Why? Because he had been diligent, worked hard, and done so well. He had respected my wishes and had done what I asked of him. Therefore, it pleased me to help him. He was not trying to perform for me; he simply wanted to please me. In the same way, God does not want us to perform for Him; He wants us to please Him. He wants our obedience to arise out of love for Him, not merely out of obligation.

Victory through Consistency // 1 John 3:23-24

At first glance, the two actions we are called to do sound like two commands from Christ: “believe” and “love.” However, John referred to these as “his command” (singular). These two commands function together as one test for true Christianity. If we truly believe the right doctrine, then we will manifest the right ethic. We confirm the authenticity of our faith by obeying the command to believe Christ and love others, which in turn produces assurance of salvation and confidence in prayer.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REMAIN IN JESUS?



DIGGING DEEPER DAVID’S VICTORIES

Although pursued by King Saul, the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel reveal God had His hand on David. After the death of King Saul and his son, Jonathan, David became king of Israel. He had one of the most successful military campaigns that Israel had ever experienced. During his reign, he extended the boundaries of Israel. He captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established a new capital. With God on his side, David was able to win many battles against neighboring countries. In only a few years, he defeated the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and the Ammonites. In the beginning, David was an unlikely king; but God took a shepherd boy and made him one of the most famous kings in Israel. When you keep your hands in the hands of Almighty God, victory is the outcome.

How can the story of King David’s victories inspire your walk with God?

John drew from Jesus' allegory of the vine and branches (see John 15:1-8) when he wrote, "The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him" (v. 24). The condition for this mutual indwelling is obedience. Obedience in faith and practice is what it means to "remain." Remain indicates a close, personal relationship with Christ—a desire to please Christ no matter the cost.

The mutual fellowship between the believer and Christ is the highlight of the Christian's earthly experience. It is only through abiding in Him that we bear fruit—the fruit of love and obedience. (see John 15:1-8). Consider the reciprocal effect. The more we believe, love, and obey, the more faith, love, and obedience we produce. As we remain in Christ and produce more fruit from our faith, love, and obedience, our assurance will continue to grow. John wasn't talking about actions we do to earn salvation, but rather, actions that cultivate and deepen our relationship with Christ. This is the essence of remaining in Christ.

When we come to Christ in faith, He comes to dwell in our hearts through His Holy Spirit. (See Rom. 8:9-10). Even as Christ dwells and remains in our lives through His Holy Spirit, the same Spirit draws us, in turn, to remain in Him and obey Him. As Paul wrote: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12-13).

HOW DO THESE VERSES GIVE US CONFIDENCE IN OUR STANDING WITH GOD?

The "working out" of our salvation and our "remaining in Christ" is the result of the Spirit of God first working in us. (See 1 John 3:24). The proof of the Spirit's presence breeds security in the heart of the believer, and that security breeds fruitfulness and productivity.

I often visit with doubting Christians. One young lady in particular struggles with the reality of her eternal security. She has become so frozen in fear that her spiritual productivity is minimal. Don't base your security on how you feel, but on what you know. We have victory because we remain in Jesus and He remains in us.



Victory over False Prophets

// 1 John 4:1-4

Our relationship with Christ is the source of our victory over the world. Christ overcame the world through His death, burial, and resurrection. (See John 16:33; Rev. 1:18). Since the Spirit of Christ resides in every believer, every Christian has likewise been given the power to overcome the world. Because He is victorious, we are victorious!

We still must be on our guard against these false teachers and false teaching. John admonished his readers, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (v. 1). False prophets are masters of confusion, but the apostle Paul assured us that God is not the author of confusion. (see 1 Cor. 14:33). Instead, God

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desires for peace to reign in the hearts of His beloved saints.

Christ is guaranteed, and we can cheer for Christ's victory even now!

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT ALLOW US TO FACE EACH DAY VICTORIOUSLY?

The responsibility falls on God's people to learn to discern truth from error. We are to "test the spirits" (v. 1). The ultimate test is this: what does a teaching or a sermon say about Jesus Christ? The core doctrine to begin with is where they stand on the truth that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (v. 2).

John lovingly reminded his readers that, while these false teachers were not from God, they were! "You are from God, little children" (v. 4). We do not stand victorious over them because of any skill or mastery within ourselves. No, we conquer because "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (v. 4). The Holy Spirit's illumination is far greater than any false teacher's deception. The Spirit gives the true testimony of Christ's identity and enables Christians to persevere in that truth.

At times, it may seem that the world is winning. We can rest assured, though, that victory in

DID YOU KNOW?

Although considered a tourist spot, Jamaica became an unlikely location for a bobsled team. In 1987, two American businessmen were inspired by a local pushcart derby to form the country's first bobsled team. The team trained for three hours a day next to a soccer field in the army barracks using a makeshift sled. This was grueling since they didn't have snow. In February 1988, they were welcomed warmly by their fellow Olympian peers. The team competed. They were the picture of endurance as disaster struck in the third heat. The driver lost control and the sled crashed. But it's what happened afterwards that showed perseverance; the team pushed the sled over the finish line as people waved and cheered.

What role does perseverance play in the victorious ending of our Christian journey?

LIVE IT

In what ways can you align yourself with Christ to be victorious everyday?

Jesus won the victory over sin through His life, death, and resurrection. When we receive Him into our hearts and lives that victory becomes ours. But we struggle to live out that victory in our day-to-day lives because we don't remain connected to the Source of our victory. Jesus said in John 15:5, "You can do nothing without me." Take a step toward connecting with Christ by doing the following:

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- **Remember victory.** Spend some time looking back at when Christ clearly gained victory over your life, whether that be freedom from doubt or when you came to Christ. Praise Him for those victories.
- **Pray in victory.** Spend time staying connected to Christ through prayer. Pray for God to overcome the darkness of this world and in your life. Have faith that He will do what He says He will do.
- **Step out in victory.** How might the assurance of Christ's victory give you the courage to move forward in what He has asked you to do? Take a step forward this week, in confidence.

DAILY READINGS

1. AND THE WINNER IS ... // 1 JOHN 5:4

America is built in part on sports. In this country, it is actually a billion dollar industry because many people are big fans who purchase tickets to attend games. Every player on the sports teams wants to be on a winning team. However, the sad reality is that not every team can be a winning team. Every team can't win a championship. There is only one team that will win the Super Bowl, the Stanley Cup, the NBA finals, or other sports championships. What an honor for the players who are on the winning team. To have Christ is to have the honor of being on the winning team. But there is a difference: a sports team may win one championship but won't always win again. On the team of Christ, we always win.

No matter what comes our way, we have victory in Jesus Christ.

2. GAME OVER // JOSHUA 10:8

When the Canaanite kings heard about the victories of Israel over Jericho and Ai, they began to develop a strategy. Then they gathered to fight the Israelites on a united front. But even the best strategy is no match for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. God reassured Joshua that he didn't have to fear. Therefore, Joshua confidently fought against his enemy and defeated them. Although Joshua faced strong opponents, he trusted God to give him the victory. With God on our side, we will be victorious too. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's.

When facing a battle just put your hand in the Master's hand. He will see you through.

3. OUR INHERITANCE // 1 CORINTHIANS 15:55

We hear many stories about inheritances when a loved one dies. We hear of family members who are distraught and at odds with one another over what they receive. Relationships are often broken and the memory of the loved one is smeared. Indeed earthly inheritances can be messy. But by God's grace, the

inheritance that awaits us in heaven is not. Our God will receive the glory, because we will be victorious over death itself. This is one of God's heart-felt promises. If we trust in Him as our Lord and Savior we have the assurance of victory over death.

Because of the resurrection of Christ, we can rest assured that our inheritance is intact.

4. THIS I KNOW // JOHN 3:16

We learned many songs while growing up in church. One of those songs was, "Jesus Loves Me." How do we know about this love? Well, the lyrics to the song answer that question: "for the Bible tells me so." There is no doubt about this. Just read John 3:16. This verse lets us know about the love of God. He loved us so much that He gave His one and only Son to die for us. Through this act, God set the pattern for love. Real love is sacrificial and should be the basis for our relationship to Him and to one another. That's the way we are loved by the Father and His Son.

No matter our background, economic status, college education or nationality, we can sing loudly because it's true, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

5. A TRUE FRIEND // JOHN 15:13

Before Christ was crucified, He spent time with His disciples. They were near and dear to His heart. Many, if not all of them had given up all they had to walk alongside Him. For three years they broke bread together, witnessed together, and fellowshiped with one another. They lived life together. Jesus taught them everything they knew about ministry and apostleship. In many cases, He gave them the power to do the impossible. It was a tight-knit bond they shared. But the irony of their relationship with Jesus was that those same friends would deny Him and even betray Him. Christ, however, remained their true friend. He willingly died for them and everyone else in the world. That's how much Christ loves us, and He wants us to love others as He loves us—sacrificially.

There is no love greater than that.



My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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