

1John 5:1-5 (READ)

Throughout Scripture God's people are known by many names

Believers – Christians – children of God – brethren

Sheep - saints – holy ones – witnesses

The chosen – ambassadors – heirs – servants of Christ – living stones

And more

Each of the Bibles names for us

Reveals something about us as believers

In our passage today John reveals yet another name for us

John calls true believers – “nikes” or “overcomers”

The word nike means - to conquer – to gain the victory – to win

Although your life may not seem like it you are nike

All believers are victors winners conquerors

Nike was a popular term among the Greeks

But they believed ultimate victory could only be achieved by the gods

So the title nike was never applied to men and women

So when he called us overcomers

John assigned to you invincibility associated only with the gods

Now remember these believers had been told by others

That there was a new way – a better way

The group that left them believed they were superior

And here John gives Christians a title reserved by the Greeks for gods

The name is used of us and Jesus used it of Himself

John 16 – In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage I have overcome the world. – I have niked the world

Jesus overcame the world He overcame the devil and He overcame death

Jesus overcoming the world is the basis for our victory

Paul writing to the Romans puts it this way

Rom 8 – In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer, through Him who loved us

Overwhelmingly conquer means that we are completely victorious

We don't just win – it's a rout

The term Paul uses is “hyper-nike”

In some baseball games they have a ten run rule
If a team is ahead by ten runs at a certain point in the game they just stop it
No use going on - the losing team will never catch up
If you abide in Christ
They could stop the proceedings and call you the winner over the world
You see abiding in Jesus means you are invincible and unconquerable
Jesus has conquered the world – He has never been defeated
He now resides in you
So in Christ you have the power to overcome the world
The “world” satanic system
That dominates the thinking and actions of nonbelievers
Its main goals are for its citizens to attempt to fulfill
Their spiritual needs through
The lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life
None of which can ever satisfy
Now listen the world can tempt you – it can scream at you and threaten you
Demand you live by its rules – but it has no authority over you
God rescued you from the power of this world system
When He placed you in the kingdom of His Son
You no longer belong to the world
You have been transferred out of it - your citizenship is in heaven
You still live in this world but you are not part of it
You are God’s ambassador to the world
Left here to bring the message of Good News and hope to needy people
Now as you abide in Christ you are invincible and unconquerable
So abiders in Christ overcome the world and they overcome Satan
James writes – Resist the devil and he will flee from you
Why will he flee – you have power over him
Paul writes – The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet
Satan’s time as king of the earth is quickly ending
In the meantime you overcome Satan
By resisting him - by being aware of his schemes
Refusing to give him an opportunity to take advantage of you
And putting on the full armor of God

There is an Arab saying that goes –the friend of my enemy is my enemy
Satan believes that and lives by it
He is your enemy because he is the enemy of Jesus and you are Jesus friend
He absolutely hates you - but in Christ you have power over him
Finally as believers we have overcome death
Death is the last enemy to be abolished so it still hangs on
But for believers death is the doorway into eternal life with Jesus
Paul to the Corinthians – The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to
God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ
Every one in Christ is an invincible overcomer
(Turn to someone and say - you are an invincible overcomer)
It is only in Jesus Christ that you are nike – conqueror victor winner
You will still lose some battles
You will fall to Satan’s temptations - self’s desires - and the world’s allure
But in Jesus - Satan sin and self has no power over you
Now since you still sin - how can you be sure you are an overcomer
How many here like tests – I know some of you do
My sister sent me a test to see if my mind was still sharp
Find the C in the block of O’s – find the M in the Block of N’s
Find the O in the block of C’s – you know what I mean
I did it right away – I wanted to know – I had some doubts
I seem to live in senior moments
I wanted - no I needed the assurance of having passed the test
In our short passage today John gives us his three tests one more time

The question has been asked – Which comes first - faith or new life
Does our faith give us new life or does our new life give us faith
John answers the question in verse 1 (REREAD 1a)
The word believes is in the ongoing present tense
The word born is in the past perfect tense
Indicating a past event with ongoing consequences
In other words we believe now because of our past new birth
Everything we do of a spiritual nature including belief
Comes as a result of God’s work in us
You have heard it said – dead men tell no tales

Well dead men don't have faith either

What medicine do you give a dead man to make him well

You can pump medicine into him all day long and he will still be dead

The only thing that can help a dead man is life

The only thing that can help men dead in their trespasses and sins

Is spiritual life – God's life

The term the reformers used for that is quickened

John Stott – Our present continuing activity of believing is the result, and therefore the evidence, of our past experience of new birth, by which we became and remain God's children.

We believe and do everything else of a spiritual nature

Because God has first made us alive – He quickened us

Now the image of spiritual birth is a wonderful picture

Because it parallels physical birth so closely

Just as in physical birth you're here because someone chose to have a child

So it is the same in the spiritual

The initiative in salvation is God's

God chose to have you as His child

James 1 –In the exercise of His will, He brought us forth by the Word of truth

Literally He (God) engendered us

Second the means of the new birth is the Word of God

As James wrote – We were brought forth by the Word of truth

Someone shared the Gospel or you read your Bible

God quickened you - you believed and you were born again

1Peter 1 – You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God

Now when a baby is born

It is not born in isolation nor is it totally unique

The baby is born into a family who will nurture him

And the baby will possess characteristics of that particular family

He will have his mother's eyes uncle Bill's nose and act just like his father

It is the same with the new birth

A child of God is born into the family of God and lives as part of that family

And the child will exhibit characteristics of His Father

The new child of God will have faith in the truth of Jesus

A love for God and His people

And a desire for holiness

First comes faith

The Christian life begins with and is lived by faith in the truth of Jesus

It's really that simple

You can't work your way into salvation

You can't pray your way in – you don't inherit it from your parents

You can't even have intellectual assent – you must exercise faith

The foundational mark of every overcomer is faith that Jesus is the Christ - the Messiah

Jesus said of Himself – I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Peter told the Jewish authorities who had Jesus murdered

There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

They might have killed Peter so this was a brave statement

Any teaching that men and women can be saved apart from faith in Jesus

Is misleading erroneous false and unbiblical

If you were to survey all who are in heaven you would find

They had different backgrounds – came from different denominations

Or no denomination at all

They have come from every tribe and tongue and nation

And they all have one thing in common

Every person in heaven with no exceptions

Will have placed their faith in Jesus Christ

All people who are born of God believe the truth of Jesus

Ever seen that commercial where someone has a milk mustache

And the announcer says – Got milk?

John is looking for evidence and asking – Got faith?

The second characteristic of God's children is love

Since God is love it is characteristic of His children to love

An overcomer loves God and also loves God's children

The child of God will love his Father and he will love the other children

It's a family thing

I've often said that no one comes out of a family without scars

Even the very best families have wounds

Every one of us has been hurt at sometime by our own family

The sad thing is that it is often true within the family of God

The people Jesus tells us to love the most – our eternal family

Are the very people we gossip about - reject - feel superior to

And sometimes intentionally wound - and all the while

God is telling us to love each other with agape love – sacrificial love

We are to do nothing from selfishness but consider others more important

Love places our eternal families interests ahead of our own

Paul describes love in 1Cor 13 – love is patient and kind, not jealous, doesn't brag, isn't arrogant, doesn't act stupidly, isn't always justifying itself and doesn't hold a grudge

That is the kind of love you and I are to have towards each other

Anything less than that is less than what God desires of you

And it's crucial for us to love like that

For it is our love for each other that will attract others to Jesus

There is a little hymn that says it pretty well

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord; we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord, and we pray that all unity may one day be restored, and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love; yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love

John is looking for evidence and asking – Got faith - Got love?

Finally God's true children obey Him

Just as it is impossible to love God without loving His Children

It is impossible to love God's children without first loving Him

Now we love God's children by self-sacrificing giving love

Which means that when we see a need we can meet - we meet it

We love God by abstaining from sin and obeying Him

Genuine saving faith produces love for God - which results in obedience

And it isn't forced obedience – it is something we wish to do

God's Spirit is in you and the Spirit loves the Law of God

If you believe God is who Scripture reveals Him to be

You must respond in love praise and obedience

If you don't respond like that

You really don't understand who God is

What He has done and what it means to you

You may be saved but you don't have a clue as to the evil of your sin
The enormity of Jesus' sacrifice and the greatness of God's mercy
You didn't just make some mistakes – you were at war with God
Everything you did – even the good stuff was sinful
And your future wasn't just cloudy – it was dark and scary
Eternal hell awaited you
But because of God's love and Jesus sacrifice you are free
Free from the penalty of sin – you are no longer going to hell
You have changed destinations – you have changed addresses
You know I have a place off Albion Rd
But that is not my home
Until my King calls me home I am an ambassador in a foreign country
Heaven is my home – it's your home
Then you are free from the power of sin – sin is no longer your master
You don't have to sin anymore you can choose to obey God
Because of the love you have for God you choose - obedience
As you make that choice it testifies that you are born again
Displaying the characteristics of the child of God
Faith in Christ – love for the body – holiness is being an overcomer

Let's close with this

Because He delights in overcomers Jesus has promised to bless them
To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God
Eating of the tree of life means we will have eternal life
The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden but God blocked and removed it
So that men couldn't eat from it and live forever in his sinful condition
But we will live forever in heaven with God
Then - He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death
The fall of Adam resulted in two types of death – physical and spiritual
Spiritually dead people receive eternal punishment in hell
Unless Jesus returns we will all experience physical death
But we won't experience spiritual death – our future is safe and secure
Then - To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone
and a new name written on the stone
Hidden manna is a picture of God supplying our needs

For the Israelites manna was God's provision for their physical need
Jesus Christ the Bread of Life is God's provision for our needs
The white stone was given to victorious athletes in the games
It served as an admission pass to the celebration reserved for winners
We have been invited to a great celebration
We have our invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb
And only overcomers - winners - conquerors - victors are invited
He who overcomes, I will give authority over the nations, and I will give him the Morning Star
According to Psalm 2 - Jesus will rule the nations
The Lord will delegate kingdom authority to us during His millennial reign
We will be under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd with authority to rule
Now listen – Jesus is the Morning Star
Someday we will experience Jesus in all His fullness
He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments; I will not erase His name from the Book of Life,
and I will confess his name before My Father and the angels
The color of purity is the right color
For those dressed in the righteousness of Christ
It is the garment you will wear to the Wedding Supper
In ancient times rulers kept a registry of citizens
If someone committed a serious crime his name was erased
He lost the privilege of citizenship
There is no sin so great – no deed so heinous
That Jesus will ever erase your name – you are in – forever
Then Jesus will confess your name to His Father and to the angels
Matthew 10 -He who confesses Me before men, I will confess him before My Father
He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it
anymore, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New
Jerusalem, and My new name
The NT pictures the church as God's temple
And you have a permanent place in God's house
Steady and immovable
You will never be forced to leave heaven
This is further assurance that you are safe secure and at home with God
Having the name of God - His City and Jesus new name written on you
Is a sign of possession

You belong to God – you belong in His city – you belong to Jesus

And they belong to you

From the Book of Hebrews – We do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city that is to come – the city, which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God – the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Finally - He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne

You are a prince in waiting

Someday you will receive your inheritance from your Father God

You will share Jesus' throne and reign victoriously with Him forever

You are a joint heir and co-ruler with Jesus – the Lord of the universe

God saved you for a purpose

God gave His Holy Spirit to you for a purpose

The evidence that you are His child comes from displaying the three characteristics of the family

Love for God – love for His children – faith in Jesus Christ