

A young man was reading his Bible one day. He read these words, *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1)*. And he thought to himself, “Man, that verse was written just for me!”

The next day the young man was reading his Bible again. He came across this verse: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*. Again, he was struck by the happy thought, “Man, that verse was written just for me.”

For several days in a row, this young man kept reading his Bible. And, day after day, he kept encountering Scripture verse after Scripture verse that made him think, “Man, that verse was put in the Bible just for me.”

And then one day his streak ended. The young man read 1 John, chapter 5, verse 4: *“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”* The young man thought sadly, “Man, that verse was not written for me. I’m not overcoming the world. If anything, the world is overcoming me.”

This young man was a faithful Christian; but, like so many of us, he didn’t have an easy life in this world. He’d experienced personal failures, family strife, emotional crises, poor health, financial hardships. The world we live in is a tough, raucous, hazardous place. So how many of us can read that Bible verse, and immediately say, “Oh, yes, that verse was absolutely written for me!”

Our sermon series is titled “Confident!” But how are we supposed to confidently face up to the world, which throws at us so much sorrow, conflict, warfare, grief, sadness,

sickness, suffering, evil? How can any one of us even hope to overcome the world?

And, yet, the Word of God says, ***“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”*** Let’s look closer at this remarkable verse, and see if we can’t grow in our confidence today.

Let’s think about this first part: ***“Everyone who has been born of God ...”*** The apostle John wrote these words. Who was John referring to? What does it mean to be born of God? John tells us in today’s lesson, back in verse 1: ***“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”*** So if you’re a believer, if you have faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, John’s talking about you in this verse (1 John 3:4). ***“Everyone who has been born of God ...”*** That’s you, a believer in Christ! That’s me. That’s the young man I was telling you about, too.

But what about this next part? ***“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”***

When John uses that word, ***“world,”*** he’s not just talking about Planet Earth. He’s speaking theologically of the fallen world, the world estranged from God, the world of sinful humans who are spiritually ignorant and even rebellious toward God.

So ***“overcoming the world”*** doesn’t mean we all get to be healthy, happy, popular, and successful in this life. You know, a whole congregation billionnaires and Instagram influencers. That’s not what this verse is promising.

This Bible verse talks about who’s going to win out in the end. Is it the world of sin? Or is it the faith that God has planted in us? This verse promises that we’re not going to

get swallowed up by that sinful, rebellious world out there. This verse talks about believers like us not being defeated, not getting crushed, not having our spirits destroyed when bad things happen to us, or when evil assaults us. This verse is a powerful promise that the world won't win, can't defeat us, will not have the final word.

When it comes to facing up to the world, yes, Christians can be confident. Yes, we can even overcome the world, as long as we understand that overcoming the world doesn't depend on how we feel about our lives, or how positive and pleasant our worldly experience may be. Overcoming the world is something God does, inside us.

God gives us faith. He calls us by his Gospel to believe in Jesus Christ, his Son. He convicts our hearts of sin; but God's Holy Spirit gives us a new heart that turn us in faith to Jesus. He teaches us about the cross, the sacrifice, the payment Christ made for our sins. God helps us believe in what Jesus has done for us on the cross and in the empty tomb. And it's that God-given, Spirit-sparked faith that gives us the victory.

What can the world do to take away our standing with God? Christ has won our eternal salvation! What can the world possibly say about that? How can the world ever rip away from you God's gifts of saving grace that he has already given to you, his baptized, Bible-believing, battle-tested, born-of God child?

*"Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world,"* John writes confidently. And then he goes on to explain, *"And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

Is that you? Do you believe that? Then the world can't defeat you, in the end. The world can't win out over the Christian believer. The world may growl and snarl at us. The world we live in will still be wicked and wild. But be confident through it all! You will overcome the world!

"This must happen," Martin Luther writes, commenting on this very Bible verse, "through faith in Christ, which is the victory. For what could this fragile vessel accomplish against Satan, the god of the world? But God is greater.... To be born of God is to believe in Jesus Christ. He who believes in Christ is now a warrior. ... For we are still engaged in the battle itself and are about to be victorious. ... God tells us to do battle and to conduct ourselves as bold warriors under him himself as our Prince" (AE30:311).

Friends, victory belongs to those with faith in Christ. Overcoming the world happens for those who believe that Jesus is the divine Son of God. Is that you? Be confident in Christ! Amen.