

Session 4

September 26, 2021

SURE OF VICTORY

1 John 3:19–4:4

Paul told the church at Rome that when faced with the tribulations of this world, “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Here, John uses the same expression for those who triumph over the false teachings and deception by those who are anti-Christ. So how do believers come out on top? John mentions three ways our victory is assured.

Because of His forgiveness (vv. 3:19-22). Verse 19 makes no sense unless we look back to verse 18: “Little children, we must not love with word or speech, but with truth and action.” How will we know we belong to the truth? By demonstrating love by our action. The act of replacing love-for-self with love-for-others is impossible apart from God’s sanctifying work in us. Yet even when we know we are saved, we are often dogged by guilt. That’s what verse 20 is getting at. While our guilt may weigh on us, God outweighs our guilt. How? Because His forgiveness is complete: past, present, and future sins have all been forgiven. His act of forgiveness is greater than any guilt we may feel (v. 20). Once we realize our own guilty feelings cannot condemn us, we are free to do the things we ought to do; those things that are “pleasing in His sight” (v. 22). For reflection: *Think about some of the guilt you may have been carrying. Do you see how it keeps you in bondage? Yet if God has forgiven us, why can’t we forgive ourselves?*

Because of His gospel (vv. 3:23-24). Here, John succinctly states our duty toward God and man. To believe in His name is to embrace all that His name represents. To confess that He is *God’s Son* is to accept His full deity. To call His name *Jesus* is to embrace His salvation (see Matt. 1:21). To refer to Him as the *Christ* is to acknowledge He is the Messiah, the anointed one of God. Calling upon the name of the Lord results in salvation (Rom. 10:13), and the Holy Spirit is given as an earnest and a seal (2 Cor. 1:22) once that commitment is made. Because the gospel is offered by grace and backed up by His indwelling Holy Spirit, we can be certain that the gospel is true. For reflection: *How do you think false teachers today twist the gospel, and why do they do it?*

Because of His Spirit (4:1-4). Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him back in John 15:26 was more than just a comfort to His disciples; it was a means by which true prophets would be distinguished from false prophets. Notice the instructions given. First, there is *caution*. (v. 1). Every believer should be cautious and discerning when it comes to those who are expounding spiritual things. Second, we are to *test* the spirits (v. 1); that is, to verify whether or not they are from God. How do we do that? By listening to the message! Only God’s Spirit will testify that Christ came in the flesh. False teachers, among other things, will *always* depict Christ as something other than fully God, incarnate (vv. 2-3). Remember, when it came to false teachers, Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:16). In other words, the *messenger* doesn’t validate the message. Rather, the *message* must validate the messenger. Finally, we should be *encouraged*. We are conquerors, because the Holy Spirit that indwells us is greater than any false prophetic spirit out there (v. 4). For reflection: *How does verse 4 apply to spiritual warfare? How does it relate to James 4:7?*