

Introduction:

One of the most powerful verses in the entire Bible is **I John 5:4**. Faith is the victory. In my mind, this statement has the ring of a battle cry. It enflames our passions to fight the good fight but strikes fear in the heart of our enemy. Let's dig deeper and learn the lessons behind this statement.

Discussion:

I. We are in a battle.

- A. There is a fight going on. We may not see it, but it exists. In **I Timothy 6:12** and **II Timothy 4:7**, Paul describes the Christian life as fighting the good fight. But it is even more than that.
- B. When the 70 returned to Jesus after they had been sent out on what we may call the limited commission, they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (**Luke 10:17**, ESV). Jesus responded in **vs. 18**, saying, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (ESV). The disciples' work on earth was having an effect in a spiritual battle, and Satan was being defeated.
- C. **II Corinthians 10:3-6** demonstrates that we walk in the flesh but we are engaged in a spiritual battle. **Ephesians 6:10-12** says we must be strong in the Lord, ready to stand against the schemes of the devil because we are in a battle against spiritual forces of darkness.
- D. A great passage that demonstrates this behind the scenes battle is in **Daniel 10:10-21**. Following three weeks of mourning, fasting, and prayer, Daniel saw one who had the appearance of a man. This is clearly an angel of God appearing to Daniel who spoke of a battle in which he and Michael the angel fought against the Prince of Persia, and the Prince of Greece was coming. We are not going to get into major details of this passage. However, suffice it to say that Daniel is not hearing about earthly battles, but about the spiritual battle that is going on behind the scenes. Daniel's earthly activities were a part of that greater spiritual battle.
- E. We may not see the ruin wreaked by this war as easily as a physical war, but it is there. We do not see advancing tanks and infantry. But we see the advance of humanism, hedonism, and individualism. We do not see bombed and burned out buildings, but we see broken homes. We do not see prisoners of war caught in torture camps. But we see seekers trapped in cults and false teaching churches. We do not see hospitals full of bleeding, crippled, and paralyzed wounded. But we see masses of spiritually beaten, exhausted, and lost sheep in need of a shepherd. We must enter this battle. We can be victorious. Faith is our victory. But what faith?

II. Faith will bring us victory.

- A. The best way I have ever heard victorious faith described is an explanation of the three kinds of faith or perhaps it would be better to say three levels of faith—conviction, trust, and surrender.
- B. The faith of conviction.
 1. This first level of faith is a surface faith. This is the faith of the intellect, an intellectual agreement to statements or facts. It is not blind, but is founded on evidence. Today, we might call this a head faith. John wrote in **John 20:30-31**, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (ESV). He was providing evidence to convict people that Jesus is more than a man who lived and died. Rather, He is the Christ, the Son of God.
 2. But stopping at this level of faith will not provide victory. **James 2:19** is clear when it says, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (ESV). Mentally agreeing with a set of statements based on evidences is merely the first step. Victorious faith must go deeper.
- C. The faith of trust.
 1. This second level is the faith of the emotions, taking our conviction a step further. At this point, we not only mentally agree that God exists and God is powerful. We trust that this powerful God is willing to take care of us. We accept that His ways are best. Today, we might call this a heart faith.
 2. This is a transitional faith. Its great importance comes from taking us beyond simple conviction and transferring us to victorious faith. However, if we stop at this point, we will not win the victory. If we simply agree to a set of facts and then only grow to trust God, believing His way is best, we will still lose our battle. **John 12:42-43** provides an illustration. The text says even many of the rulers of the Jews believed Jesus. They mentally agreed

that Jesus was Messiah. They trusted that His teachings were right. But they had a problem. They wanted men's praises and they would lose that if they let their faith grow any deeper. They would not confess Jesus and we know what Jesus said about that in **Matthew 10:32-33**.

D. The faith of surrender.

1. This third and victorious level of faith is the level of surrender. This is a faith of the will. Building on our conviction and resting in our trust, we give up our will and work to accomplish Christ's will and work. Our faith is completed as it not only fills our head and our heart but guides our hands. Today, we might call this a hand faith.
2. Paul described this victorious faith in **Galatians 2:20**. He had crucified himself with Christ. He was convicted of Christ and trusted Him so much that he had crucified his own will and desires to be completely guided by Christ's will. James demonstrated the victorious nature of this faith in **James 2:14-26**. It is the surrender of the will and work that makes faith perfect or complete. Until our faith translates into surrendered action, we will not achieve victory through Christ. But when we are convicted enough to trust Him and when we trust Him enough to surrender to Him, then He will accomplish victory through us and we will overcome the world.

III. What's the take away?

- A. This is all good to know. We are in a battle. To win, we need a faith of the head, heart and hands. But if we stopped here in our lesson, it would be a lot like recruiting a bunch of folks into the military and then shipping them to the battlefield saying, "Alright boys, to win you just need to get some weapons and learn how to fight. Hope it works out for you. See ya." That is a formula for military disaster. Those boys need to be trained and equipped. We may ask, how do we get trained and equipped to have victorious faith?
- B. **Romans 10:17** provides the answer. "So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (ESV). I cannot stress this enough. Our greatest tool in the battle to overcome the world is the Bible. It is not church attendance. It is not eating with Christians. It is not positive mental attitudes. It is the Bible.
- C. In **Ephesians 6:13-17**, Paul described the armor with which the Christian warrior must be arrayed to overcome the enemy. We know the Word of God is described as our sword. But notice that, in reality, every piece of the armor is tied to the Word. Our loins are to be girt up with the truth that comes from God's Word (**John 17:17**). We must put on the breastplate of righteousness. The Word trains us in righteousness (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Where is this Gospel of peace but in the Word of God (**Colossians 1:5**)? Then we take up the shield of faith. That is what we are talking about today and we have already noted that it comes from the Word (**Romans 10:17**). Finally, we put on the helmet of salvation. Which salvation we gain from obedience to the Word (**Acts 20:32; II Timothy 3:15**).
- D. Without being in God's Word we are facing the battle unarmed. Consider these very serious questions. Do you ever feel like you are just not getting what you need spiritually? Do you ever feel like God is not with you? Do you ever feel like you are unprotected from the world's advances into your life, home, and family? Do not look to others. Do not look to the church. Do not look to the preacher, elders, or teachers. Look to God's Word. How much time do you spend in God's Word? Putting our armor on only a couple of times a week during sermons or Bible classes will not get the job done. We need to arm ourselves every day or we will become a part of the walking wounded. We will still be walking around, apparently unaffected and unharmed but bleeding from the mortal wounds in our spiritual heart. We must be in the Word.

Conclusion:

I John 5:4 says our faith is the victory. We are in a battle. We will win. But we will only win through faith. This is our battle cry—Faith is the Victory! Faith is the Victory!