

Victory in Jesus - 1 John 5:4-5 – (4 Jan 2015)

So turn your Bibles with me to 1 John chapter 5, and we will read these two verses as a people.

"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

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?"

(1 John 5:4-5 ESV)

It's a very simple text that has the emphasis on one word, isn't it? The word is the word 'overcome'. It means to have victory, to defeat others, to be the overcomer. Now, I think this is a word that appeals to us because everyone of us loves a winner. We hate to be on the losing side. If you are supporting a soccer club, you wish your soccer club will keep winning. It's very difficult to support a team that is losing. Everybody loves to win. Everybody loves a winner.

When I was growing up, I was attracted to a movie that shows - that is really about - a man who overcomes all odds. Ah, this is a very childish thing when I look back. But I supported Rambo. (Image shown is of a brawny gun-toting man). You know, he went against all odds. The American Army can throw all kinds of soldiers, tanks, weapons at Rambo but he is the guy who somehow is able to keep alive and kill everyone who stands in his path. He is the overcomer during my day.

Now, I am told that Rambo 5 is coming on board soon. So he has overcome all odds even though it's been twenty, thirty years; he is still Rambo-ing away. But we love stories about heroes and overcomers. But you say, this guy is fictitious, he is not real.

Well, in life, we also hear of overcomers. A real-life example is this young boy named Samuel (a picture of him is flashed on the screen). He is not from our church, you don't have to guess. But I read about him in our newspaper. I read about him in the media. Samuel comes from a very difficult family and circumstance. His parents are divorced. He lives with his mom and his grandfather. But his grandfather has dementia - can't remember things. His mom, just a few years back, was stricken with stroke, was pretty much immobile for a while. She sank into depression because of the stroke and also lost her job as a result.

So what happens is that the entire family - just the three of them - now depends on young Samuel to make ends work or to make ends meet. So, he will be the one who will go shopping, he will be the one who buys the groceries, the food (picture of Samuel at a supermarket). And he took it all on himself against all odds. And what is remarkable about this boy is that he doesn't moan or groan or complain about it. His teacher had this testimony about him "that he's always thinking of others and is a brave boy who took it upon himself to take care of his family. In fact, we didn't know about his situation at home at first and found out by chance only when he fell sick in Primary 5". (03:10)

So there is this boy who overcame all kinds of obstacles, all kinds of odds and turn out to be one of the top students in Damai. I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly - Damai Primary School. And, by the way, he is also the head prefect of his Primary School. Remarkable young boy who overcomes the odds of life.

Spiritually speaking, God tells us we are also overcomers, in a sense like Rambo and in a sense like Samuel, because the Bible tells us :

"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. 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?" (1 John 5:4-5 ESV)

So God tells us that he who is born of God is an overcomer. Now I want to be clear right from the word go. It is very easy for us to come to church and say, 'Wow! This is a great New Year's message which is going to pump me up for the rest of the year. I'm going to be the top boy in my school. I'm going to be a top salesman in my company. I'm going to close many deals. I'm going to be rich. Is this what it means to overcome the world? I'm sorry to tell you, actually I'm happy to tell you, that's not what God promises. He's not saying that the Christian is going to be the top boy in his school. He's not saying that the Christian is someone who will strike it rich in life. He's not saying that the Christian today will defeat all his business competitors, because God is saying something more, something more important, something more amazing! It is not overcoming the world in its riches but it's overcoming the world in its sinful influences in our lives. See, we, as Christians, if you really know God, if you believe in Jesus Christ, God has so changed your heart that now your priority is to honor God. Now your priority is to walk with Jesus and to walk like Jesus. You want to be godly, you want to be Christ-like, you want to be holy and this is the amazing comforting Scripture for us. If that is your desire, if that is who you are because you are born again, you will overcome the world. (05:40)

Yes, we fight against severe opposition. We are fighting against all kinds of odds. Satan is against us. The world, which is a whole philosophy of thoughts controlled by Satan, is against us. The flesh is against us but because you are born of God you overcome the world. And, in this New Year, this is so important to some of you. This morning, you walk defeated, you walk crushed. You are crushed under the weight of expectations in your work, in your office, and therefore you are now struggling with worries and anxieties and stresses and fears. Some of us today are crushed by sin. We are struggling with pornography, with lust, with anger management, with bitterness. We struggle today because we see the worldliness and covetousness in our hearts that we detest. We wish we were not like this and you are crushed under all this. But God has a word for us. We can have 'Victory in Jesus' today, in Jesus Christ. You don't have to be living under these things. You can get on top of these things. You can be an overcomer in Jesus Christ. So, for this New Year, 1 John 5, verses 4 & 5, I pray will be an encouragement to you that you can live a victorious Christ-centered life because of Jesus, our Lord.

This sermon is not going to be long. It's going to be short, rather simple because I just want to explain this and, very simply, apply this for you this morning. So, let's start by understanding what is the meaning of the word 'overcome'. The word 'overcome' is from this Greek word 'nikao'. And, 'nikao' is just another form of this and another Greek word 'nike'. Now, I know all of us we pronounce this as 'nikey'. When I was young I do not know how to pronounce - 'nik, nik, nik'. That's what I said. Ah, but yes, today, in American terms, we pronounce this as 'nikey', familiar with Nike shoes, Nike apparel but, in the Greek, it is pronounced as 'nikay' and that's a form that is 'nikao' and the work 'nikao' is really to mean 'to get the victory'. It's a very simple word. We will overcome the world. We will gain victory over the world - simple as that. And it is an often repeated word in verses 4 and 5 as I mentioned. The three times it appears here it's appearing in the form of 'nikao'. And then there is the word 'victory'. You can see the word 'victory' is the word 'nike'. So, four times in two verses.

The theme of John's teaching here is about victory. Now, this is a fascinating word because the context of 'nikao' or 'nike' is usually applied to gods. Now, the Greeks, I'm sure you know they have Greek mythology. They have different kinds of gods, Muse and so on and so forth. And, to the Greeks, they believe that real conquerability or real invincibility is only possible by the gods. Man, yes, we can have occasional victory. We can have some form or some measure of victory but the real victory belongs to the gods. For example, in Greek mythology, they have this god. (Image shows a winged woman). Anybody knows the name of this god? I'll be very impressed if you know. I'd got to google like crazy to find out. Alright, the name of this goddess is ... give a guess. The name of this goddess is ... Nike, okay? It's very simple. She is Nike, and if you go Wikipedia or whatever source, you will find that this is the goddess of strength, of stamina and of victory. So, when John talks about victory, about being an overcomer, it is a very stunning statement to the readers because they always associate this kind of victory possible only to the gods but not to men. But here, John is boldly saying 'you are a victor, you are an overcomer, you have complete victory over the world. You say, 'victory over what?' But the Bible tells us we've victory over the devil (Revelation 12:11). Revelation is also written by John. He says, (10:22)

"And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." (Revelation 12:11 ESV)

What a tremendous description of the believer. The Bible doesn't say a believer is someone who simply comes to church, who simply owns a Bible at home but they who have 'conquered the devil' (this refers to Satan). This is what marks them out. They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of the testimony and they love not their lives even unto death. A real believer loves Jesus and is willing even to give up his life for Jesus Christ. So we see that an overcomer here overcomes the devil. And this is not unique. In Revelation because, like I said in 1 John, he has already said that we will overcome the evil one.

"I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:13 ESV)

There are many false teachers, there are many deceptive things going around but because you are a believer, because you hold on to God's Word, you don't fall prey ultimately to deception and to lies. Again, same thought in verse 14 :

"I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." (1 John 2:14 ESV)

So, the Christian life is not one that is of absolute tranquility and peace on the outside because there is battle going on. There is a deception going on. We are on the battleground, not the playground, but the hope and the joy is that we overcome the evil one, 1 John 4:4 again,

'Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, ('them' here refers to 'false teachers') for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.'

We've gone through this in our series. It's helpful to remind ourselves : an overcomer overcomes the false teachers.

"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." (1 Corinthians 15:56-57 ESV)

And we are told here also that we overcome sin, we overcome death, because the victory is through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, what I'm trying to show you is that it's a rather specific kind of victory, not one of riches or status or position in life, but the real measure of spiritual victory over deception, over the devil, over temptations, over lures and over the world's influence. You have overcome the world. Now, maybe some of us are familiar with those last-minute goals when you see soccer matches. 'Whoa, it's a tie -- it's 2-2.' And then in the very last minute, the final corner kick, someone scores and says, 'That's a victory'. Now, that's a victory all right but that kind of victory is very close. It's like you get the victory by the skin of your teeth. It's the last minute thing but that's not the kind of victory that we learn of in this Bible.

The Bible tells us of a victory that is absolute and crushing. The Bible says,

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39 ESV)

The word there is the word 'hyper' which means 'super' basically. We are super conquerors! It's not the last-minute buzzer-beating shot. It's not the last kick of the match. It is an absolutely crushing victory that we have in Jesus Christ. In other words, when it comes to sin, when it comes to deception, the reality John is saying is that those who are born of God enjoys and experiences, and can look forward to, that kind of crushing victory where sin absolutely cannot defeat him. When deception absolutely cannot defeat him and it's not just once a while -it's regular- because the word 'overcomes' in the original language is in a continuous tense. (14:26)

"For everyone who has been born of God (is overcoming) the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is it that (is overcoming) the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5 ESV)

You will regularly be overcoming and overcoming and overcoming. You'll be crushing and crushing and crushing the world, the devil and the flesh. The question for us is : 'Now, Pastor, I can get what you are saying but that's not my experience so far because even though I'm a Christian I struggle with sin', isn't it? I mean, how many of you say, 'I absolutely crush sin every day in my life. I'm regularly.... anyone like that? Anyone at all? Probably not. So how does this work? If John uses such absolute terms, if the Bible gives us such absolute victory, such consistent absolute victory, is something missing? Why are we not experiencing this kind of amazing victory promised in Scripture? Well, the reason is this: let me move on a little bit to say, "Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world". This kind of overcoming is only available to those who are born again. Very simple. I give you a quote:

'Your first birth made you a sinner and a loser,
but your second birth makes you a conqueror.'

Isn't it true? In my first birth, in Adam, I'm a loser, I'm a sinner. I will always sin. I can't do anything but sin. All my works are filthy rags. I've all gone astray. I will never please God. My first birth in Adam, I'm a loser, I'm a sinner, and I'll never walk towards Christ. But the amazing reality is when you're born again, when you receive Jesus, when God gives you that Zoe, as we've looked at, that eternal life; we now change from being a sinner and loser to a winner. But, I will say this : it is not automatic. While this is guaranteed, this is not automatic. Why? Because it requires something and John tells us what we need - the reason the missing link from God's amazing promise and the reality of our life is this link called faith. The reason why I'm not regularly experiencing overcoming the world is because I'm not regularly exercising faith, not believing. Suppose most of you today would have parked your car by the carpark. And you go to your car later on and you say 'car, move'. The car won't move. By the way, your car has every potential to move, isn't it? Your car has every potential to ferry you from point A to point B but just sitting in the car doesn't make your car move. The only way your

car will move is when you put your key into the keyhole and you start the car. Until you're willing to activate the car, the car doesn't move.

Maybe another example: you have a million dollars in your bank account and you go to the chicken rice store owner and say 'Uncle, I want chicken rice'. Now, Uncle says, 'three dollars, please'. You look at him, 'Uncle, I have one million dollars in my bank account'. He says 'no, three dollars, please.' 'Uncle, I really have a million dollars.' You do have a million dollars but you can't buy anything until you activate your ATM, until you draw out the money. The money is all there but if you don't release it or use it, you don't have it. Now we have the life of Christ in us but you will not experience that victory until you live by faith looking to Jesus Christ, looking to God, asking him, praying to him to live that life through you. See, Christian living is not about you obeying and serving and doing all these things in your own power. It has to be lived by faith.

Now, I'm sure over the Christmas period you have received many gifts. My sons, not any different, they receive different gifts. And I show you one gift that we got, actually from my sister. She bought for him this, not the exact thing because I sort of just dismantled it and started to play with it without taking pictures. But this is something like it. (Picture of a game set). This is a dinosaur extraction kit. Dino extraction kit. Well, there's a block of chalk-like material and you're supposed to act like an archaeologist or palaeontologist whatever and you take this chisel, this hammer and you chisel it away. And you're supposed to find and unearth, dig out the bones from within. It's a messy affair. We tried for a while and the whole place is white and with all the flicks and bits and pieces but well that's fun. (19:40)

I let my sons try. Of course, Matthias, who is 2 1/2, he couldn't do anything. He could just watch. He wanted to touch and we didn't quite allow him to. Shawn followed what I try to do but he took like half an hour and nothing moved. Knock, knock, knock. Can't get through. He just couldn't do it. So eventually, I got to come into the picture. Now, other people show pictures look like very easy, hah. (image of 2 girls happily chiseling away on a similar block). Just like that easy, easy lah but in reality not like that, lah. If you buy this toy, I tell you, it takes effort. So, anyway, we did it and Shawn says, 'Daddy, I can't do this. I can't break it open.' He asked me for help. I helped him. And I proceeded to virtually take out the whole thing. It's my toy, not so much their's now. And, Matthias wanted to be a part of it. He just didn't like it that it was all Daddy's thing. He wanted to have a role to play so he held onto my hand as I hammer this thing and he enjoyed the process. So, after about half an hour, forty-five minutes, we got to break it out, take it out, wash it.

The final product is done. And it looks like this, literally. (Picture shows the completed toy dinosaur beautifully put together). It's supposed to shine in the dark. Whoa, very cool. Haven't seen it in the dark yet and Matthias liked this for a while, for a short while. He likes dinosaurs. But when Mummy comes home in the afternoon, he brought this dinosaur to Mummy and said, 'Mummy, Mummy, I

make, I make'. 'Matthias, are you sure you made?' I make, I make. Whoa liao, what did you do, Matthias? Of course he wouldn't say it but I know what he did. He just puts his hand on my hand and that's all he did. But he reminds me so much of our lives, of ourselves. We like to think that the breakthroughs, the victories in life are because of us, forgetting it is actually our Father, our God, who is the One who alone can give the victory. We can't. Actually, Matthias was more a hindrance lah, putting his hands there. I mean I do not need his strength. He has virtually none to do that. But we think that we have done something. But real victory is not in us.

Real victory is in God. And, like Shawn, maybe we should ask, 'God, help us. I'm stuck in this block. I'm stuck with this sin. I'm stuck with such anxieties. Help me break free.' And you know something? The victory is absolutely crushing. I mean the gypsum hole has no power against the might of Jason Lim. I mean it takes a bit more time but it has no way of standing before my might. And I thought there's no way our sins will stand before God, if we ask him to. There is absolute crushing victory. That's why Abraham Lincoln..., I thought this quote is cool :

"Without Christ I cannot succeed.

With Christ I cannot fail.' ~ Abraham Lincoln

'Without Christ I cannot succeed.' That's true. But think about it, the other way, too. 'With Christ I cannot fail.' We are, maybe, very familiar with the former but maybe with the latter, we doubt. 'Lord, I'm struggling with pornography. I don't think I will ever get out of this.' You know I'm a natural worrywart. I will never break free from worries. Yah, you can't blame me. I'm just born to love the things of this world. I can never get rid of this. And we keep saying this to ourselves forgetting what Lincoln has said : 'With Christ I cannot fail.' And these two realities must be put together in balance. Without Christ, no chance. But with Christ, I cannot fail. And so, this is a vivid reminder of the reality we are more than conquerors, not in and of ourselves, but through him who loved us:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:37 ESV)

Therefore, if you realize, as I ponder about victory in Christ : throughout the Scriptures, God actually regularly calls us to look to him. Remember about faith and remember about Peter. This is a story about looking to Jesus. (Painting depicting Christ walking on the water and helping Peter from drowning). I mean, Jesus was out there in the waters, in the storm, and Peter somehow said, 'Lord, bid me come to you. I want to walk on water.' And Jesus says, 'Come'. And Peter, the only guy amongst the twelve to step out of the boat, he walked towards Jesus. I mean, that was an amazing sight. In Chinese, we have these shows called.. (Pastor quoted a few titles of Chinese pugilistic novels). Have you heard of that guy? Okay, okay, for those of you who don't read Chinese pugilistic novels, whoa, there is this guy who can walk on water. No one can do that, of course, but Peter is the first human being, I suppose, besides the Lord Jesus, to walk on water in the storm. And he did great. All his

friends say, 'whoa, Peter, good one!' And they hope that maybe he walk the path secure then they will follow later. And Peter was excited, I'm sure, as he walked towards Jesus. (25:13)

But soon, he began to hear the winds and the waves. His eyes started to drift away from Jesus to looking at the scary storm around him. And that's where the Bible tells us he began to sink. And Jesus says, 'Why did you doubt? You of little faith.' It's almost like saying, 'Peter, you should have kept looking to me and you would have been an overcomer. You will not be drowned.' And God, in this passage, is calling all of us today, as we go through the storms of life, to keep looking to him because this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith. Looking... to Jesus. Jesus Himself tells us to look to him for fruit-bearing. He says

"Abide in me, and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you, unless you abide in me." (John 15:4)

He tells us the branch can never do anything. I mean, a stick that you find on the street would never bear fruit. The only way a stick, a branch, can bear fruit is when it is abiding in the vine. It's very absolute. Without Christ, I cannot succeed. But with Christ, if you are looking to Jesus, if you are abiding in him; you will bear forth much fruit. You cannot fail. How about this great verse about the Christian life :

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

The Christian life is not one whereby, after you are saved, you still depend on yourself. The Christian life is lived by faith in the Son of God. Paul says the old life is gone. It's crucified with Christ. I've a new life and this new life is to be lived in constant dependence and looking to Jesus. I live by the faith in the Son of God. There is no other way. You know why, today, as Christians, we keep stumbling and falling and sinning and being crushed? It's because our eyes are taken off the Lord. Because we have failed to be abiding. It's because we have failed to live by faith in the Son of God. And, any moment you fail to, you fail. But any moment you look to Jesus, you cannot fail. And even through the trials - God intends for us to go through difficult times - makes us weak, makes us powerless so that we may then find that his
grace is sufficient, His power is made complete and perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)

So God, in the Scripture and our circumstances of life, is regularly drawing us to say, 'Look to me. Jason, look to me. John, look to me. Mary, look to me. You worry, you stress, you lust, you covet, you hate, you lose it, because you fail to look to me. Look to me and I'll give you the Nikao, the Nike, that overcomes the world ~ absolutely crushing sin, absolutely crushing Satan's lies, absolutely crushing

the temptations of the world to live in that victory with me. You cannot fail so keep looking to me, keep walking on water, keep trusting Jesus.'

If you go to my house... I'll show you this later. But maybe look at Romans 8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of Life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." This is a great verse and this is a verse that tells us how the Christian life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit overcomes the power of sin and death. But let me show you a picture in my family, in my home. Er, this, if you come to my place, you will see this picture (of a hot air balloon in flight in the clouds). It's hanging on one of the walls and some people ask, 'where did you get this? why do you put this?' I've never really told anyone. I mean, it's just a decorative piece, I suppose. But I was looking for a picture. I decided to look for a hot air balloon not because I want to sit on one. I don't think I'll ever sit on one. I don't want to die. It's just scary. I just feel that somehow it may burn through. Too many things that can go wrong. So, I think, in my life, I probably won't go on a hot air balloon but I want to appreciate the lessons I can learn from a hot air balloon.

There are several reasons why I like this picture. Number 1, if you remember in our church we sing this song 'Higher Ground', right? And when we sing the song 'Higher Ground', the picture behind the words is a picture of a hot air balloon, at least in the past. I can't remember recently but when I sing 'Higher Ground', I always look at the hot air balloon and I say to myself that's what I want to experience. I don't want to stagnate, I don't want to backslide, I want to always press on to higher ground for Jesus. I want to be nearer to him, I want to be further away from this world, I want to be changed in my mind, I want to be changed in my life and in my heart, so - Higher Ground. I want to be reminded not to live for the things of this world but to be living for the things above and any reminder, this (the hot air balloon) is a little token of remembrance for me. (30:50)

And, the third reason why I like the hot air balloon is because I remember a preacher who came to our church years ago. During church camp, he was sharing about the law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death. He says these are two opposing laws in Romans 8:2 : There's a law of sin and death that is like gravity. It pulls you down. Everyone of us, we are, today, affected by this law called 'gravity'. I can jump but I'll always land. You can stand up but you'll always want to sit down because there's something pulling you down - Gravity. But when you go on to an airplane or into a hot air balloon and when it's activated, it brings you up. And you can go very, very high. Now, it doesn't mean that in an airplane or in a hot air balloon, there is no more gravity. There still will be gravity, right? If you don't believe, you just open the door and step out and see what happens. There is gravity that happens, that's exerting its influence on you but the force of aerodynamic is so strong that it counteracts the law of gravity : You rise.

And the preacher says, according to Romans 8:2, there is always going to be a law of the flesh in us. Till Jesus comes, we are always going to struggle with this gravitational pull ~ to sin, to lust, to covet,

to hate. It's always there. But the only way you can rise and not succumb is when you stay in the basket, when you stay in the aeroplane, and when you stay right there, there is a more powerful force that counteracts this gravitational pull and that is the law of the life in the Spirit. It's the law of looking to Jesus who lives in you.

In fact, the preacher went on to say he knows of a man who has an anger management problem and he regularly gets heated up and upset in business meetings. So, this man, after hearing this preaching on Romans 8 about life in the Spirit overcoming the life of sin and death, he got for himself a hot air balloon replica, like a toy, a figurine. And in meetings, he will put the replica right in front of him. I mean, everybody puts papers and notes but he puts this balloon. And, whenever he gets heated up, he reminds himself, 'I got to stay in the basket. I got to look to Jesus'.

My friends, any time we sin today, it's because our eyes are taken off Jesus. It can be an indulgent purchase, it can be a lustful act, it can be an outburst but it's not because Jesus failed you but you fail to look to Jesus. You fail to remember Abraham Lincoln's words : Without Christ I cannot succeed, but with Christ I cannot fail.

In this New Year it's looking to Jesus' victory in your life. God doesn't want you to wallow in your sins. God doesn't want you to struggle along. God doesn't want you to limp in your spiritual life. He wants you to walk on water. He wants you to rise up into the stratosphere. He wants you to draw near to him and he says, 'I've given you victory in Jesus who lives in you.'

I wish you a blessed New Year and I wish we all, today, will have our eyes fixed on Jesus in 2015 that we'll rise to higher ground and glorify God where we live. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

This morning, we have a very simple message for you. It's from God's Word. Everyone who is born of God overcomes, regularly overcomes, the world. Why? This is the victory that overcomes the world ~ our faith. When you look to God, when you trust in Him, when you surrender your own desires and say, 'God, take over in my life. Let me be abiding in you, let me live in this basket, let me stay in this basket', God brings you to higher ground. (35:17)

And my friends, this is not a fragile victory. This is an absolutely decisive victory Jesus brings because Jesus said, 'I have overcome the world.' Jesus, on the cross, says, 'It is finished.' Jesus is risen today. He's our victorious King, and if you look to him today, daily in your life you can experience that daily victory God wants you to have. So, my friends, this morning is there a sin in your life that you need to surrender to God in? Maybe because you have forgotten to turn your eyes to Jesus, or, maybe for that moment you've taken your eyes off Jesus. Would you be, this time, where you will, repent and turn back to God? Would you, today, praise God for this amazing victory that is available for you? Would you endeavour and ask God today, 'Lord, keep my eyes fixed on you for this year. I may fail at times but when I do, please help me to recalibrate that you will be my vision, that you will be my all in all,

that I will be abiding in the vine, that I'll be walking on water, that I'll experience what it means when you say, 'my strength is made perfect in weakness'. That the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.' May this year be a victory for you as you endeavour to pledge yourself to him this day.

My dear friends, if you are here today for the first time, I tell you an amazing news - Jesus died for all your sins. This is the victory. Jesus paid it all. You came to church today probably because you want to find truth. Probably because you know there is something missing in your life. Probably because you know that you have sinned, you are not worthy of a God who probably is mighty and holy and just. And, somehow, in the depths of your heart, God is saying you need forgiveness, you need salvation, you need to hear his word. I say to you his word is that you are so sinful you can't believe it if you are told. But there is a God who loves you so amazingly that it's so hard for you even to ever imagine it, but though it is difficult to us, but this is what God has said : you are so sinful you cannot save yourself. But God so loved you that he gave His Son for you even though you deserve nothing but the wrath of God.

So this morning, you can come, and indeed, he commands you to come. He commands you to repent of your sin and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. He tells you that His Son came two thousand years ago to die for your sins and is risen again. And, he says, whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Today, it might be the day you receive this new birth, you receive this new life. Would you turn from sin and believe in Jesus? Would you repent and humble yourself and come to Jesus?

Dear Church, we have a tremendous message to tell the world. It's always painful when you tell people about news of defeat and discouragements and failures? But the Christian message is not a message of failure. The Christian message is a message of victory - victory over sin, victory over death, victory over deception, victory over ourselves, victory over the world. Would you go and tell others about this message of victory ~ Victory in Jesus Christ? Do you know that your family, your friends, your colleagues are living in defeat today? They may live it up in life. They may have a big house, fancy car, smiley family but I tell you, inside their hearts, they are struggling, they are separated from God, they are victims of sin and indeed they are sinners themselves. But you can bring them victory, to know God, to have life, to live in Christ's likeness and purity. Would you be their ambassador, that messenger of victory, today?

Dear God, as we come to you this morning, thankful for these encouraging words from Scripture, I pray, though, that we would not just be hearing a pep talk but we'll receive your Word with a humble heart and that you enable us, today, to turn to look to you and to experience that victory on a daily basis. Thank you, dear God, for victory in Jesus. May we all be able to say the life which we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God. May Jesus be seen. Thank you, you love us. Thank you, you give us

this victory. May we access it by faith, regularly, for your own name's sake. We ask and pray all this now in Jesus' Name. Amen.

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