

Faith Is The Victory!



**How Faith In Jesus Christ As The Son Of God
Helps Us To Overcome Life's Difficulties**

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The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style. To God be the glory!

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Faith Is The Victory!

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

1. In his first epistle, John writes of victory in overcoming the world...

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn 5:4-5)

2. The “world” to which John refers are those things in the world that would separate us from God
- cf. **1 Jn 2:15-17**

- a. The lust of the flesh (immorality, inordinate emotions)
- b. The lust of the eyes (materialism, greed, covetousness)
- c. The pride of life (vainglory, boasting, arrogance)
- **These things can be summarized in one word: Sin**

3. There are other things in the world which can hinder our relationship with God, such as...

- a. Anxiety
- b. Boredom
- c. Depression
- d. Despair
- e. Discontentment
- f. Fear
- g. Grief
- h. Loneliness

-- **These emotional states of mind, when not caused by some organic condition, are often the results of SIN as well (perhaps not sinful action, per se, but sinful thinking)**

4. For whatever is in the world that might hinder our relationship with God...

- a. There can be victory in overcoming the world!
- b. Such victory comes to those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God
- **Yes, “Faith Is The Victory!”**

5. In this series, I would like to examine how faith in Jesus enables one to overcome the world...

- a. With this lesson, we will define faith, and especially faith in Jesus as the Son of God
- b. In succeeding lessons, consider how faith in Jesus can provide victory over things such as those mentioned above that can hinder our relationship with God

[According to John, victory in overcoming the world requires faith in Jesus; it is important then to know exactly what faith is...]

I. FAITH IN JESUS DEFINED

A. FAITH IN GENERAL...

- 1. As defined by **Easton’s Bible Dictionary**:
 - a. Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true

- b. Its primary idea is trust
- 2. It is a strong conviction or trust in something; as the NIV translates **He 11:1**...
 - a. *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for...”*
 - b. *“...and certain of what we do not see.”*
- 3. E.g., you have faith that your parents are indeed your parents
 - a. Based upon your trust or conviction in the reliability of their word
 - b. Such trust prompts you to respond accordingly

B. FAITH IN JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD...

- 1. It is a strong conviction or trust in Jesus:
 - a. **Who Jesus is**
 - 1) That is what He claimed
 - 2) That is truly the Son of the living God
 - b. **What Jesus did**
 - 1) That He died on the cross for our sins
 - 2) That His death is truly a sufficient propitiation or sacrifice for our sins
 - c. **What Jesus said**
 - 1) That He alone provides the way to eternal life
 - 2) That He alone is the way to God, the Father - cf. **Jn 14:6-7**
- 2. Peter professed this faith in Jesus - **Jn 6:68-69**
 - a. That Jesus has the words of eternal life
 - b. That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - cf. also **Mt 16:15-16**
- 3. When a person has such faith in Jesus...
 - a. They look to Jesus for the solution to any problem they face
 - b. They have trust and conviction that what He says is the right answer or solution
 - c. They are willing to act with trust and conviction on His word - cf. **Lk 6:46**
- 4. For those with an active faith in Jesus, their lives are built on a solid foundation...
 - a. Like a wise man who builds his house on a rock - **Lk 6:47-49**
 - b. They are able to weather the storms of life, because their faith in Jesus has prompted them to prepare for whatever comes their way!

[This is the kind of faith that overcomes the world! The problem is that while many have a degree of faith to **“hear” (listen)** what Jesus said, most don’t have sufficient faith to **“do” (obey)** what He says!

If we desire to have the kind of faith in Jesus that will help us overcome the world, how is it developed? It is not as difficult as you might think...]

II. FAITH IN JESUS DEVELOPED

A. FAITH COMES FROM EVIDENCE...

- 1. Many people believe that faith is something blind, that you **“just gotta believe”**
 - a. It is true that faith is often a strong conviction in “things unseen” - cf. **He 11:1**
 - b. But there are solid reasons for believing in what you cannot see
 - 1) Just as you believe in George Washington, though you have never seen him
 - 2) Just as you believe in who your parents are, though you can’t remember who was there at your birth

2. Other people believe that faith is some gift from God for a select few
 - a. It is true that in one sense faith is a “gift” from God - cf. **Ep 2:8; Ro 12:3**
 - b. But while faith owes its ultimate source to God, it is available to all
 - 1) For God desires all men to be saved - **1 Ti 2:3-6**
 - 2) And He desires that which produces saving faith to be proclaimed to all the nations - **Ro 1:16; 16:25-26**
3. Faith comes from evidence provided by God Himself!
 - a. God provided signs and wonders so that people might believe in His Son - **Jn 5:36; 10:37-38; 14:10-11**
 - b. And so the apostles recorded these signs that we might believe - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - 1) Believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God
 - 2) Through such faith to have “life” (i.e., victory over the world!) in His name

-- **This leads us to the primary source of faith for us today...**

B. FAITH COMES FROM THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Even as Paul declared: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” - **Ro 10:17**
 - a. Faith (trust and conviction) is founded upon what the Word of God reveals
 - b. This is especially true regarding faith in Jesus! - again cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
2. The Word of God produces faith in Jesus by the evidence it provides...
 - a. E.g., the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament
 - b. E.g., His signs and wonders recorded in the Gospels
 - c. E.g., the testimony of eyewitnesses in the Acts and epistles

-- **As one meditates upon the Word of God regarding Jesus, faith is developed!**
3. Faith in Jesus that leads to victory must come from the Word of God!
 - a. The reason many people do not live victorious lives is a lack of faith
 - b. They have a weak faith because they do not read and study the Word of God!
 - c. Not only is their faith weak, but they often don’t even know the teachings of Jesus that can help them to overcome the world!

CONCLUSION

1. I contend that faith in Jesus gives one the victory in overcoming the world...
 - a. Whether it is overcoming sin which separates us from God
 - b. Or it is overcoming sinful thinking that hinders our relationship with God
2. Victorious faith in Jesus comes from the Word of God...
 - a. Which is why I cannot overemphasize the importance of feeding upon it daily
 - 1) A lack of knowledge concerning God’s word was Israel’s downfall - **Hos 4:6**
 - 2) When people do not have access to His word, they are very weak - **Amo 8:11-14**
 - 3) Even Jesus resorted to the Word of God to overcome temptation - **Mt 4:4,7,11**
 - b. Why deprive yourself of the means that God has given to produce saving faith? - **Ja 1:21**

In our next lesson, we shall consider how faith in Jesus provides the victory in overcoming **sin**...

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Sin

INTRODUCTION

1. The theme for this series is “**Faith Is The Victory!**”, with the following text as the basis for our study...

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn 5:4-5)

2. In our previous study, we saw that the faith which overcomes the world is...
 - a. A strong conviction and trust in Jesus:
 - 1) As the Christ, the Son of God - cf. **Ac 8:37**
 - 2) As the way, the truth, and the life - cf. **Jn 14:6-7**
 - 3) Who alone provides the way to God and eternal life - cf. **Jn 6:68-69**
 - b. A strong conviction and trust in Jesus that comes by:
 - 1) The Word of God - **Ro 10:17**
 - 2) The evidence provided by the Word of God - **Jn 20:30-31**
3. The “world” we can overcome by faith in Jesus includes anything that can hinder our relationship with God, even such things as...

a. Anxiety	c. Depression	e. Discontentment	g. Grief
b. Boredom	d. Despair	f. Fear	h. Loneliness
4. Our purpose in this series is to illustrate how faith in Jesus helps us to overcome such things, but it is important that we first talk about overcoming **sin**...
 - a. While sin is not taken too seriously these days, it should be
 - b. The problem of sin must be overcome if we are to overcome anything else
 - 1) In some cases, sin may be the underlying cause of problems we face
 - 2) In any case, unless we overcome sin, we will not have God’s help to overcome the problems before us! - cf. **Isa 59:1-2; 1 Pe 3:12**
5. In this lesson, I wish to do two things...
 - a. Carefully define the problem of sin
 - b. Explain how faith in Jesus helps us to overcome the problem of sin

[Let’s begin then by considering...]

I. THE PROBLEM OF SIN

A. THERE IS THE “GUILT” OF SIN...

1. First, everyone is guilty of sin - **Ro 3:23**

- a. Even if one has committed just one sin, it as though they have committed them all! - cf. **Ja 2:10**
- b. That is because sin is so terrible, and God is so holy!
2. There is both “**legal**” guilt and “**emotional**” guilt
 - a. Legal guilt means you have violated God’s law
 - 1) God has a Law, and if we break it, He holds us accountable - **1 Jn 3:4**
 - 2) The price of such guilt is “death”, i.e., eternal separation from God - **Ro 6:23; Re 21:8**
 - b. Emotional guilt pertains to one’s conscience of sin
 - 1) When we know we have done wrong, we feel “guilty”
 - 2) Our conscience becomes burdened by such “guilt” for our sins
3. Even if we have so hardened our conscience that we feel no “**emotional**” guilt, the “**legal**” guilt remains
 - a. God still holds us accountable, and will judge us on the last day - **Jn 12:48; Ac 17:30-31**
 - b. Until then, unforgiven sin also prevents God from coming to our aid - **Isa 59:1-2; 1 Pe 3:12**
 - 1) Which means we must bear our burdens alone
 - 2) Whatever comfort, peace, and strength God might provide, is not for one who remains in their sin! - cf. **Isa 57:19-21**

B. THERE IS THE “POWER” OF SIN...

1. The problem of sin is not limited to guilt
 - a. As if the guilt of sin weren’t bad enough!
 - b. Sin also has the **power to enslave** a person so that they can’t do what they really want to do!
2. Jesus described the power of sin - **Jn 8:31-34**
 - a. In passage often misapplied to talk about truth leading to freedom (e.g., political)
 - b. The freedom under consideration is freedom from the slavery of sin!
 - c. When one commits sin, they become a slave of sin!
3. Paul vividly depicted what his life was like under the bondage of sin, from which the Law of Moses could not deliver - **Ro 7:14-24**
 - a. He was “*sold under sin*” - **Ro 7:14**
 - b. He could not do what he wanted, and what he did not wish to do, he did - **Ro 7:15**
 - c. He found that “*sin dwells in me*” - **Ro 7:17,20**
 - d. Though he desired to do good, “*how to perform what is good I do not find*” - **Ro 7:18**
 - e. He found himself brought “*into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*” - **Ro 7:23**
 - f. It made him “*wretched*”, crying out for deliverance from “*this body of death*” - **Ro 7:24**

[Sin is a like a powerful drug, to which we become enslaved (addicted). Until we somehow are set free from the power of sin, the guilt of sin separates us from God; any problem we have, therefore, we face alone, with no assistance from God! But through faith in Jesus, there can be victory in overcoming sin! Let’s see how...]

II. HOW FAITH IN JESUS OVERCOMES SIN

A. BY PROVIDING THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN...

1. Remission of sins is promised to those who believe in Jesus - **Ac 10:43**
 - a. Made possible by the shedding of His blood - **Ep 1:7**
 - b. Jesus became our “propitiation” (a sacrifice designed to appease) - **1 Jn 2:2; 4:9-10**
 - c. Through His blood we are “justified” (i.e., declared “not guilty”), and therefore spared from the wrath of God to come - **Ro 5:9**
2. Such forgiveness is promised to those whose faith in Jesus moves them to repent and be baptized - **Ac 2:38; 3:19**
 - a. **Repentance** - that “change of mind” in which we turn from sin to serve God
 - b. **Baptism** - that “burial” in which we are united with Christ into His death, that we might be crucified with Him and then rise to walk in newness of life - **Ro 6:3-7**
3. Forgiveness continues as we repent and confess our sins in prayer - **Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9**
-- **In this way Jesus deals with the “guilt” of sin (legal and emotional - cf. He 9:14)**

B. BY PROVIDING THE POWER OVER SIN...

1. In **Ro 6:6-7**, Paul speaks of freedom from sin...
 - a. *“we should no longer be slaves of sin”*
 - b. *“...has been freed from sin”*
2. Later, in **Ro 8:1-2,12-13** he describes where this “power” comes from...
 - a. It is the *“law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ”* which frees one from the *“law of sin and death”*
 - b. In particular, how the Spirit enables us to *“put to death the deeds of the body”*
 - c. With the aid of the Spirit, we now have the help of God to overcome sin! - cf. **Ep 3:16, 20-21; Ph 4:13**
3. The promise of the Spirit was given by both Jesus and His apostles
 - a. To those who believe in Him - **Jn 7:37-39**
 - b. To those who repent and are baptized - **Ac 2:38-39**
 - c. I.e., to those who obey Him and become “children of God” - cf. **Ac 5:32; Ga 3:26-27; 4:6; 5:16**
-- **In this way Jesus deals with the “power” of sin**

CONCLUSION

1. To the one who is willing to believe in Jesus, with a trust and conviction to do what He says, then **“Faith Is The Victory!”**
2. There is certainly victory over **sin...**
 - a. Over the legal and emotion guilt of sin
 - b. Over the power of sin which easily enslaves us
-- **This He does through the gift of His blood, and the gift of the Holy Spirit!**

With such wonderful gifts, we can now have the kind of relationship with God by which we can also overcome whatever else the world might throw at us...

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

1. With faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, we can overcome the world! - **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - a. As we saw in our previous study, we can overcome **sin**...
 - 1) Both the guilt of sin, and the power of sin
 - 2) Through the blood of Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - b. For such blessings are available to those who truly believe in Jesus! - cf. **Ac 2:36-39**
2. But in overcoming sin, we must also deal with the “**aftershocks**” of sin...
 - a. Such as the lingering consequences of sinful conduct
 - b. Or the residues of sinful thinking; i.e., attitudes and perspectives that conflict with a life of faith
-- **I have mentioned some of these in previous lessons: anxiety, boredom, despair ,etc.**
3. With this lesson, I would like to begin taking a look at each one of these...
 - a. Seeking to gain a better understanding of what they are
 - b. Hoping to provide an appreciation of how faith in Jesus can help us to overcome them!
4. Beginning with “**anxiety**”...
 - a. According to the **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**...
 - 1) More than 23 million people suffer from anxiety disorders
 - 2) People with anxiety disorders are heavy utilizers of emergency rooms and other medical services
 - 3) Anxiety disrupts work, family, and social lives, with some becoming housebound
 - 4) It is the most common of all the mental disorders
 - b. Christians certainly are not immune to the problem of “**anxiety**”...
 - 1) Jesus anticipated that His disciples would have it, and provided solutions to it
 - 2) Just as anxiety disrupts work, family, etc., so it can hinder our service to the Lord

[As Christians it is imperative we overcome “**anxiety**” in our lives. Where to begin? Perhaps with...]

I. UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

A. ANXIETY DEFINED...

1. According to the **American Heritage Dictionary**:
 - a. A state of uneasiness and apprehension, as about future uncertainties
 - b. A state of intense apprehension, uncertainty, and fear resulting from the anticipation of a threatening event or situation, often to a degree that the normal physical and psychological function of the affected individual is disrupted
2. According to **NIMH**, there are different kinds of anxiety disorders:
 - a. **Panic Disorder** - Repeated episodes of intense fear that strike often and without warning. Physical symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath,

dizziness, abdominal distress, feelings of unreality, and fear of dying.

- b. **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder** - Repeated, unwanted thoughts or compulsive behaviors that seem impossible to stop or control.
- c. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** - Persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing a traumatic event such as criminal assault, war, child abuse, natural disasters or crashes. Nightmares, flashbacks, numbing of emotions, depression and feeling angry, irritable, distracted and being easily startled are common.
- d. **Phobias**, of which there are two major types
 - 1) **Specific** - In which people experience extreme, disabling, and irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger; the fear leads to avoidance of objects or situations and can cause people to limit their lives unnecessarily.
 - 2) **Social** - In which people have an overwhelming and disabling fear of scrutiny, embarrassment, or humiliation in social situations, which leads to avoidance of many potentially pleasurable and meaningful activities.
- e. **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** - Constant, exaggerated worrisome thoughts and tension about everyday routine life events and activities, lasting at least six months. Almost always anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it; accompanied by physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea.

B. SOME CAUSES OF ANXIETY...

1. A perceived **threat**, as to one's...
 - a. Personal safety
 - b. Self-esteem
 - c. Relationship with others
2. Pressures presented by **conflict**; for example...
 - a. Having to decide between two desirable but incompatible goals
 - b. Faced with a desirable goal, but concerned about undesirable consequences (such as whether to accept a good paying job, that may force you to relocate)
 - c. Faced with having to choose between two undesirable alternatives (such as suffering pain, or an operation that may in time relieve the pain)
3. An underlying **fear**, such as being fearful of...
 - a. Failure, or even achieving success
 - b. Rejection, intimacy, conflict
 - c. Sickness, death, loneliness
 - d. The future, meaninglessness in life

C. MODERN TREATMENT FOR ANXIETY...

1. **Medication** - Useful for relieving symptoms, they include antidepressants and are usually administered through trial and error to see which medications and dosage are beneficial to a particular patient
2. **Psychotherapy** - Two different forms are the most effective in treating anxiety disorders:
 - a. **Behavioral therapy** - Tries to change actions through techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing, or through gradual exposure to what is frightening
 - b. **Cognitive-behavioral therapy** - Teaches patients to understand their thinking patterns so they can react differently to the situations that cause them anxiety

[Treating anxiety with **medication** can only relieve symptoms; it does not deal with the causes of anxiety. Even **behavioral therapy** focuses primarily on handling the symptoms. What is called **“cognitive-behavioral therapy”** appears to address the underlying causes of anxiety, and it is in this realm that I believe faith in Jesus can really help one to overcome!]

II. OVERCOMING ANXIETY THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

A. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO OVERCOME ANXIETY...

1. Certainly because of how it affects our lives and our service
2. It is also a reflection of **“little faith”** on our part
 - a. E.g., worrying about things like food and clothing - cf. **Mt 6:30**
 - b. E.g., worrying about preserving one’s life - cf. **Mt 8:25-26**
3. “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith; and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.” (George Muller)

B. REMEMBER WHAT TRUE FAITH IN JESUS ENTAILS...

1. That one has a strong conviction or trust in **Who Jesus Is**
 - a. The Son of God - **Mt 16:16**
 - b. The only source for life eternal - **Jn 6:68**
 2. That one has a strong conviction or trust in **What Jesus Said**
 - a. That He speaks the words of truth, which can make one free - **Jn 8:31-32**
 - b. That whatever He says is true, for grace and truth come by Him - **Jn 1:17**
 3. That one has a strong conviction or trust in **What Jesus Did**
 - a. That He died on the cross for our sins - **1 Co 15:3**
 - b. That His death is an adequate sacrifice for our sins - **1 Jn 2:2; 4:10**
 4. That one has a strong conviction or trust in **What Jesus Is Doing**
 - a. That He is preparing a place for us - **Jn 14:2**
 - b. That He is even now interceding for us - **He 7:24-25**
 5. That one has a strong conviction or trust in **What Jesus Will Do**
 - a. That He will come again one day - **Ac 1:9-11; Re 1:7**
 - b. That He will receive us unto Himself - **Jn 14:1-3**
- **This kind of faith in Jesus comes from the Word of God! - Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**

C. JESUS HELPS US TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY THROUGH HIS TEACHINGS...

1. **By reminding us of God’s providential love and care - Mt 6:25-32**
 - a. He who provides the body and life, can surely provide food and clothing
 - b. He who provides for the birds and flowers, can surely provide for His children
 - c. If worry (anxiety) can’t make us grow taller, how can it affect the future?
 - d. God is mindful of our true needs, and is able to provide
2. **By teaching us where to place our priorities - Mt 6:33**
 - a. The kingdom (rule) of God in our life is the most important thing
 - b. Put Him first, and He will provide for our true needs
 - c. As Jesus said to worried Martha, “one thing is needed” - cf. **Lk 10:38-42**
3. **By revealing our own limitations - Mt 6:34**
 - a. Don’t worry about the future, we can only handle what we face today
 - b. In keeping with what Jesus said, here are some thoughts from others:

- 1) “Your ship is equal to the load of today; but when you are carrying yesterday’s worry and tomorrow’s anxiety, lighten up or you will sink.”
- 2) “God never built a Christian strong enough to carry today’s duties and tomorrow’s anxieties piled on top of them.” (Theodore Ledyard Cuyler)
- 3) “Man, like the bridge, was designed to carry the load of the moment, not the combined weight of a year at once.” (William Arthur Ward)

-- **When we truly accept what Jesus taught, many of the causes of anxiety are gone!**

D. JESUS HELPS US TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY THROUGH HIS ACTIONS...

1. His actions **in the past**
 - a. By dying on the cross, He has paid the full price for our sins
 - 1) Any anxiety about our guilt, past actions, can be relieved through forgiveness!
 - 2) A forgiveness that cleans even the conscience! - **He 9:14**
 - 3) Such forgiveness comes to those who believe on Him - **Ac 10:43; 2:36-38**
 - b. By rising from the dead, He has demonstrated power over death
 - 1) Ensuring our own resurrection, of which He spoke - **Jn 5:28-29; 11:25-27**
 - 2) Freeing us from the bondage of the fear of death - **He 2:14-15**
2. His actions **in the present**
 - a. Interceding as our High Priest
 - 1) Making it possible to find mercy and grace when needed - **He 4:14-16**
 - 2) Providing an avenue of peace to dispel our anxiety through prayer - **Ph 4:6-7**
 - b. Reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords
 - 1) He is truly the “ruler over the kings of the earth” - **Re 1:5**
 - 2) He is the One who holds “the keys of Hades and of Death” - **Re 1:18**
 - He is in ultimate control, and we are in His hands!
3. His actions **in the future**
 - a. He has promised to never forsake us - **Mt 28:20; cf. He 13:5-7**
 - b. He has promised to take us one day to be with Him - **Jn 14:1-2**

CONCLUSION

1. When one has faith in Jesus...
 - a. Willing to change their thinking patterns and conduct to reflect His teachings
 - b. Believing in what He has done, is doing, and will do
...they will be attacking the underlying causes of anxiety!
2. Jesus certainly desires that we not let such concerns control us...
 - a. By rendering us unfruitful - cf. **Lk 8:14**
 - b. By making us unprepared for the Judgment to come - cf. **Lk 21:34-36**
3. But He has made it possible to overcome anxiety...
 - a. Through faith in Him, which comes through the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**
 - b. By the peace of God, which comes through Jesus Himself in prayer - **Ph 4:6-7**

Are we willing to believe and heed Jesus? If so, then **“Faith Is The Victory”**, even in overcoming anxiety!

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Boredom

INTRODUCTION

1. Our theme in this series of lessons is **“Faith Is The Victory!”**...
 - a. Based upon the words of John in **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - b. Proclaiming faith in Jesus as the Son of God as key to overcoming the world
 - c. Not just the world of sin, but anything that might hinder our relationship with God

2. Our previous lesson considered the problem of **“anxiety”**
 - a. A problem which according to the NIMH...
 - 1) Afflicts more than 23 million people in this country
 - 2) Disrupts work, family, and social lives, with some becoming housebound
 - 3) Is the most common of all the mental disorders
 - b. A problem which faith in Jesus can help us to overcome...
 - 1) For Jesus provides the solution to anxiety by what He taught - cf. **Mt 6:25-34**
 - a) Reminding us of God’s providential love and care
 - b) Teaching us where to place our priorities in life
 - c) Revealing our own limitations
 - 2) In addition, through Jesus’ work on the cross and His current role as our High Priest, He becomes the means by which anxiety can be relieved through prayer - **Ph 4:6-7**

3. Another problem many people face today is the opposite of anxiety: **“boredom”**
 - a. Whereas **anxiety** is a state of uneasiness and apprehension, **boredom** is a condition of mental weariness, listlessness, and discontent
 - b. **Anxiety** is often the cause of thinking we have too much to do at one time, **boredom** is result of thinking there is nothing to do
 - c. **Anxiety** is more often the bane of adults, whereas **boredom** is often the complaint of children (what parent hasn’t heard their child say, “I’m bored”?)

[Like anxiety, boredom can have a debilitating effect in our relationship with God and on our usefulness to Jesus Christ. That is why we must overcome **“boredom”**, and a good place to start is with...]

I. UNDERSTANDING BOREDOM

A. DEFINING BOREDOM...

1. Self-proclaimed boredom expert, **Garfield the Cat**, offers these tips to tell if you are really bored:
 - a. You paint little faces on your nails, and pretend each finger is a person
 - b. You spend hours watching bread mold
 - c. You braid your eyebrows
 - d. You watch a 3-hour documentary on sewage treatment
 - e. You start playing the spoons

- f. You wonder if you're really bored
2. More seriously, boredom is: "a condition of mental weariness, listlessness, and discontent" (American Heritage Dictionary)
3. What is of interest is the statement that "the word did not even enter the English vocabulary until the Enlightenment of the 18th century, the beginning of the modern era." (Gene Edward Veith, *Boredom and the Law of Diminishing Returns*)

B. CAUSES OF BOREDOM...

1. Boredom is often the result of too much wealth, and too much time on our hands
 - a. Boredom is epidemic among children today, and according to one source...
 - 1) The problem is television, videos, and computer games
 - 2) Such activities which bombard children with fast-moving stimuli do not give them the chance to slow down, reflect thoughtfully, or learn to process new information (Nancy Samalin, *Parent Guidance Workshops*)
 - b. Russian women are finding that boredom and depression are side effects of wealth (Alessandra Stanley, *New York Times*, March 11, 1997)
 - c. "By his very success in inventing labor-saving devices, modern man has manufactured an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes in earlier civilizations have ever fathomed." - Lewis Mumford
2. Boredom can also be traced to...
 - a. A lack of faith in God ("Boredom: the consciousness of a barren, meaningless existence." - Eric Hoffer)
 - b. A preoccupation with self to the neglect of what is around us
 - 1) "Boredom: what happens when we lose contact with the universe." - John Ciardi
 - 2) "When people are bored, it is primarily with their own selves." - Eric Hoffer
3. Boredom has also been attributed to...
 - a. Unchallenging jobs
 - b. Unfulfilled expectations
 - c. Lack of physical activity
 - d. Being too much of a spectator and too little of a participant in activities

C. THE DANGER OF BOREDOM...

1. When listless and discontent, we are susceptible to what promises excitement
 - a. "Boredom has made more gamblers than greed, more drunkards than thirst, and perhaps as many suicides as despair." - Charles Caleb Colton
 - b. "Boredom is often the motivation for adultery and divorce, abuse of alcohol or drugs, and even suicide." - *ibid.*, Veith
 - c. "Boredom is...a vital problem for the moralist, since at least half the sins of mankind are caused by the fear of it." - Bertrand Russell
2. When a Christian is "bored"...
 - a. He is not very active in his service to the Lord
 - b. He is therefore not very useful to the Lord

[Boredom has been called "**a chronic symptom of a pleasure-obsessed age.**" (*ibid.*, Veith). For the Christian with faith in Jesus, it is possible to overcome boredom! Here is how...]

II. OVERCOMING BOREDOM THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

A. JESUS CHANGES OUR FOCUS IN LIFE...

1. Boredom is the result of an obsession with self and material possessions
2. Yet Jesus teaches us to:
 - a. Deny self - **Lk 9:23-24**
 - 1) People who are obsessed with self are never happy
 - 2) People who lose themselves in service to God are never bored!
 - b. Change the object of your affections - **Mt 6:19-21**
 - 1) The pleasure of earthly things is fleeting at best, followed by the inevitable letdowns - cf. "the passing pleasures of sin" - **He 11:25**
 - 2) The only permanent possession we have is in heaven, and our affections should be placed on it
3. His teachings are designed to give us great joy - **Jn 15:11**; e.g., **Ac 20:35**
-- **If we have enough faith in Jesus to follow His teachings, we will be attacking one of the root causes of boredom (a preoccupation with self)**

B. JESUS ENLISTS US IN SERVICE DESIGNED TO TRULY SATISFY...

1. Many people are bored because they know their efforts mean very little
2. Yet Jesus would have us enlist in a service with eternal consequences:
 - a. The saving of one's soul, and that of those around them! - **Mk 16:15-16**
 - b. Which is more important than gaining the whole world! - cf. **Mt 16:26**
3. The apostles found their service to God to be a source of great joy
 - a. When John saw the fruits of his labors, he wrote he had "no greater joy" - **3 Jn 3-4**
 - b. The prospects of seeing his converts in the presence of the Lord gave Paul hope and joy for the future! - **1 Th 2:19-20**
- **When one is engaged in the work of Jesus, their labors are not in vain, and have cosmic consequences (cf. Ep 6:12-13)...how can one be bored with that?**

CONCLUSION

1. Solomon learned after a life of excess that this world has nothing lasting to offer...
 - a. Though exciting at first, it all proved "vanity" - **Ecc 2:10-11**
 - b. He concluded man's true purpose was to "fear God and keep His commandments" - **Ecc 12:13**
-- **If he had only listened to his father, David, who wrote about the "great reward" in keeping God's commandments (cf. Psalms 19:7-11), Solomon might not have experienced so much vanity in his life**
2. Boredom is a result of preoccupation with the "vanity" of this life...
 - a. Jesus came to deliver us from any sense of listlessness and discontent
 - b. He does so by giving us purpose and direction in life, that we might find great joy in serving God and His children!

When people are willing to believe in Jesus and become His disciples, there is no reason for boredom in their lives!

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Depression

INTRODUCTION

1. In this series we have been considering how faith in Jesus gives us the victory...
 - a. In overcoming sin
 - b. In overcoming what are often the consequences of sin or sinful thinking-- Using as our basic text **1 Jn 5:4-5**
2. We have stressed that faith in Jesus involves...
 - a. A strong trust and conviction in who Jesus is, what He did, what He taught
 - b. Accepting and acting upon His words and those of His apostles
3. We have looked at how faith in Jesus can address the problems of...
 - a. Sin itself
 - b. Anxiety
 - c. Boredom
4. Now we will consider how faith in Jesus can help us overcome “**depression**”...
 - a. According to the **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**...
 - 1) During any one year period, 17.6 million people suffer from a depressive illness
 - 2) Depressive illnesses often interfere with normal function, causing pain not only to those with the disorder, but to those who care about them
 - 3) Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the ill person
 - b. Christians certainly are not immune to the problem of “**depression**”...
 - 1) Great men of God have been known to suffer depression: Elijah, David, Jeremiah
 - 2) I know mature Christians who have had to deal with the problem of depression

[Overcoming depression is not easy, but it can be done. As before, let’s start by trying to understand the problem we face...]

I. UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

A. DEPRESSION DEFINED...

1. According to the **American Heritage Dictionary**: A psychotic or neurotic condition characterized by an inability to concentrate, insomnia, and feelings of extreme sadness, dejection, and hopelessness
2. According to **NIMH**:
 - a. Depression is a “whole-body” illness, involving your body, mood, and thoughts
 - b. It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things
 - c. It is not the same as a passing blue mood, nor a sign of personal weakness
 - d. It is not a condition that can be willed or wished away; without treatment, symptoms

- can last for weeks, months, years
3. Two serious types of clinical depression are...
 - a. **Major depression** - manifested by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy pleasurable activities. These disabling episodes of depression can occur once, twice, or several times in a lifetime.
 - c. **Bipolar Disorder** - formerly called manic-depressive illness. Involves cycles of depression and elation or mania. Mood switches can be dramatic and rapid, but normally are gradual. When in the depressed cycle, one can have any or all the symptoms of a depressive disorder. When in the manic cycle, any or all of the symptoms of mania may be experienced. It affects thinking, judgment, and social behavior in ways that can cause serious problems and embarrassment. It is often a chronic recurring condition.

B. SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AND MANIA...

1. Depression

- a. Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- b. Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- c. Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
- d. Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- e. Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- f. Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down”
- g. Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- h. Restlessness, irritability
- i. Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- j. Recurring aches and pains that don’t respond to treatment

2. Mania

- a. Excessively “high” mood
- b. Irritability
- c. Severe insomnia
- d. Grandiose notions
- e. Increased talking
- f. Disconnected and racing thoughts, easily distracted
- g. Increased sexual desire
- h. Markedly increased energy
- i. Poor judgment
- j. Inappropriate social behavior

C. CAUSES OF DEPRESSION...

1. **Other illnesses** can bring on depression (e.g., strokes, some cancers, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, hormonal disorders).
2. **Some medications** cause depressive symptoms as side effects (e.g., certain drugs used to treat high blood pressure and arthritis).
3. **Genetics and family history** - Depression runs in families. Some people probably have a biological make-up that makes them particularly vulnerable.
4. **Certain personalities** - People with low self-esteem or who are very dependent on others seem to be vulnerable to depression.

5. **Life events**, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, moving to a new place, money problems or any sort of loss can be linked to depression. People without relatives or friends to help have even more difficulty coping with their losses.

C. TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION...

1. **Medication** - Useful for relieving symptoms, they include antidepressants and are usually administered through trial and error to see which medications and dosage are beneficial to a particular patient
2. **Psychotherapy** - Talking with a trained therapist can be effective in treating certain depressions. Therapy includes:
 - a. **Cognitive therapy** - Aims to help the patient recognize and change negative thinking patterns that contribute to depression
 - b. **Interpersonal therapy** - Focuses on dealing more effectively with other people; improved relationships can reduce depressive symptoms
3. **Biological treatments** - This includes electro-convulsive therapy; research is also being done on the use of light for the treatment of depression

[As a member of a family with a genetic predisposition toward depression, I am particularly sensitive to the problem of depression. I don't discount the value of medical efforts to treat depression or any other illness, for even Paul counseled the medicinal use of wine to treat stomach ailments (cf. **1 Ti 5:23**).

I am persuaded, however, that faith in Jesus can greatly complement any effort to overcome depression...]

II. OVERCOMING DEPRESSION THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

A. JESUS ADDRESSES MANY ISSUES THAT CAN DEPRESS PEOPLE...

1. Among many things that can make people depressed, there are such things as:
 - a. Guilt for sins committed in the past
 - b. Concern regarding one's relationship with God in the present
 - c. Fear for what might happen in the future
2. As we have stressed before, what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do, addresses such problems
 - a. He addresses the problem of sin, through His death on the cross!
 - b. He teaches us how to pray, and maintain a healthy relationship with God!
 - c. He gives us hope and promise concerning the future, through His resurrection and ultimate return!

B. JESUS PROVIDES POSITIVE COGNITIVE THERAPY...

1. Cognitive therapy seeks to help one recognize and change negative thinking patterns that contribute to depression; sample suggestions include:
 - a. Don't set for yourself difficult goals or take on a great deal of responsibility
 - b. Break large tasks into small ones, set some priorities, do what you can as you can
 - c. Don't expect too much from yourself too soon as this will only increase feelings of failure
 - d. Participate in activities that may make you feel better

- e. Try to be with other people; it is usually better than being alone
2. In His teachings, Jesus stressed similar principles!
 - a. Reminding us of God's providential love and care - **Mt 6:25-32**
 - b. Teaching us where to place our priorities in life - **Mt 6:33**
 - c. Revealing our own limitations - **Mt 6:34**
 - d. Pointing out the kind of selfless service can provide true joy - cf. **Jn 13:12-17; Ac 20:35**
 - e. That God is longsuffering, willing to forgive and comfort the downhearted - cf. **Mt 5:3-6**; the parable of the Prodigal Son, **Lk 15:11-32**

C. JESUS PROVIDES POWERFUL INTERPERSONAL THERAPY...

1. Interpersonal therapy focuses on one's disturbed personal relationships that both cause and exacerbate the depression
2. Jesus certainly addresses interpersonal relationships!
 - a. Our relationship with God - cf. **2 Co 5:18-21**
 - b. Our relationship with our fellow man - e.g., **Mt 5:23-24; 18:21-22**
3. Through His death and teachings He strengthens interpersonal relationships!
 - a. Reconciling us back to God and man - cf. **Ep 2:14-17**
 - b. Teaching us how to love God and one another - e.g., **Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 5:2-3**
 - c. His church is to be a family, providing strength and encouragement, even bearing one another's burdens - cf. **Ga 6:1-2; 1 Th 5:14**

CONCLUSION

1. Depression, like anxiety and boredom, is not something to be taken lightly...
 - a. Many people suffer from it, including brothers and sisters in Christ
 - b. It can have a debilitating effect on the one who suffers from it, and on those around them
2. Yet Christ can provide a way out for those willing to have faith in Him!
 - a. Not just faith in the one suffering from depression
 - b. But faith in those who are in position to aid the suffering
 - It is only when both the "patient" and the "care-giver" accept and act upon the words of Jesus can there be the kind of joy, peace and comfort Jesus intended
3. Indeed, His teachings are designed to provide true joy and peace - **Jn 15:11; 16:33**
 - a. As Paul wrote, God "*comforts us in all our tribulation*" - cf. **2 Co 1:3-4**
 - b. But such comfort is intended to be shared, that "*we may be able to comfort those who are in trouble...*"

Is our faith in Jesus what it ought to be? Is it such that we can carry out Paul's admonition...?

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

If so, then truly we can say: **"Faith Is The Victory!"**

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Despair

INTRODUCTION

1. In this series I have attempted to show how faith in Jesus gives us the victory over such things as:
 - a. Sin
 - b. Anxiety
 - c. Boredom
 - d. Depression-- **For I am persuaded that in overcoming the world and whatever it throws our way, “Faith Is The Victory!” - cf. 1 Jn 5:4-5**

2. Closely related to “depression” is the problem of “**despair**”...
 - a. Those who are depressed are often in a state of despair as well
 - b. Despair may be a cause for their depression, or at the least making it worse

3. As I hope to illustrate in this study...
 - a. Despair (i.e., hopelessness) is a serious problem, not one to be taken lightly
 - b. It is damaging to our health, our society, and our relationship with God-- **Certainly Christians should seek to dispel despair in their lives, and in the lives of those around them!**

[Let me begin, then, by sharing some things I learned in my own study on the subject of despair...]

I. UNDERSTANDING DESPAIR

A. DESPAIR DEFINED...

1. According to the American Heritage Dictionary: To lose all hope; to be overcome by a sense of futility or defeat; complete loss of hope
2. Synonyms for despair include hopelessness, despondency, discouragement
3. **Mark Twain** described despair as “...a time when one’s spirit is subdued and sad, one knows not why; when the past seems a storm-swept desolation, life a vanity and a burden, and the future but a way to death.”

B. THE DANGER OF DESPAIR...

1. Despair takes its toll on **society**
 - a. According to researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia Health Sciences Center, a lack of hope has been linked to poor behavior in children
 - b. As reported by Reuter’s Leslie Lang, children with high levels of hopelessness...
 - 1) Tended to engage in harmful and destructive behavior to themselves and others
 - 2) Tended to be defiant, refusing to obey rules, take turns, share, and skip school
 - c. The researcher quoted indicated that hopelessness may be an indicator for children and teens who are prone to act in antisocial or aggressive behavior

2. Despair takes its toll on your **physical health**
 - a. It can have the same detrimental effect on the heart as smoking a pack of cigarettes, according to a study published in the August, 1997, issue of *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*
 - b. “a high level of hopelessness exacerbates the atherosclerotic process in middle-aged men” (Dr. Susan A. Everson)
 - c. I.e., it increases the thickness of the arterial walls
3. Despair is certainly detrimental to **one’s spiritual health**
 - a. To be in despair is a slap in the face of God
 - 1) “He that despairs degrades God.” - Owen Felltham
 - 2) “When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God.” - Charles L. Allen
 - 3) “It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent.” - Jeremy Taylor
 - b. To be in despair renders one ineffective in helping others: “He that is fallen cannot help him that is down.” (unknown)

[The pervasiveness of despair in our society is reflected in the words of Thoreau: “**The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.**” But as Clare Boothe Luce said, “**There are no hopeless situations. There are only people who have grown hopeless about them.**”

Charles Swindoll has said that “**Surrendering to despair is man’s favorite pastime. God offers a better plan, but it takes effort to grab it and faith to claim it.**” With that I agree, and so now wish for us to consider how...]

II. FAITH IN JESUS HELPS US TO OVERCOME DESPAIR

A. JESUS PROVIDES HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS...

1. Through **His teachings**...
 - a. Telling us of God’s providential care - **Mt 6:30; 7:11; 10:29-31**
 - b. Telling us of God’s love for the lost - **Lk 15:7; Jn 3:16-17**
 2. Through **His promises**...
 - a. Telling us of the abundant life He offers - **Jn 4:13-14; 6:35; 10:10**
 - b. His promise of the resurrection He offers - **Jn 11:23-27**
 - c. His promise of His return and the place He is preparing - **Jn 14:1-3**
 3. Through **His actions**...
 - a. His death on the cross provides the hope of our forgiveness!
 - b. His resurrection provides the hope for our own resurrection!
- **Jesus is truly “our hope”! - cf. 1 Ti 1:1**

B. THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, THE CHRISTIAN...

1. Has hope in God regarding the resurrection - **Ac 24:15; cf. 1 Pe 1:3**
2. Can rejoice in hope regarding the glory to come - **Ro 5:1-2**
3. Use the Scriptures as a constant replenisher of hope - **Ro 15:4**
4. Even abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit - **Ro 15:13; Ga 5:5**
5. Has the hope of salvation as a “*helmet*” to protect our minds - **1 Th 5:8**

6. Can look forward to the *“blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* - **Ti 2:13-14**

CONCLUSION

1. It has been said that **“Life with Christ is an endless hope, without him a hopeless end.”**
 - a. For those who are in Christ, they have every reason to hope!
 - b. For those outside of Christ, one can understand why there is often despair!
2. For those in Christ, we are charged to hold fast to our hope...
 - a. “but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” - **He 3:6**
 - b. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” - **He 10:23**-- **And for good reason, for “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...” - He 6:19**

Through faith in Jesus, we can hold fast to our hope, and gain the victory!

**God be praised, that to believing souls
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair!**

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Discontent

INTRODUCTION

1. I trust that as we are making our way through this series that the value of faith in Jesus is becoming ever more apparent...
 - a. In overcoming sin
 - b. In overcoming anxiety, boredom, depression, and despair-- I.e., **“Faith Is The Victory!”** in overcoming the world with its many ills - cf. **1 Jn 5:4-5**
2. Another ailment that afflicts many people is **“discontent”**...
 - a. It appears to be closely related to “boredom”
 - b. Just as “anxiety” and “despair” are closely linked
3. In my study on the subject of **“discontent”**, I found what seems to be conflicting views...
 - a. Some describe discontent as evil: “A man’s discontent is his worst evil.” - George Herbert
 - b. Others speak of it as something good:
 - 1) “Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation.” - Oscar Wilde
 - 2) “Restlessness and discontent are the necessities of progress.” - Thomas Alva Edison
 - 3) “Show me a thoroughly satisfied man - and I will show you a failure.” - Edison

[Is it wrong to be “discontent”? Or is it necessary for progress? The problem may be one of semantics, so let’s start with seeking to understand exactly what it is we are talking about...]

I. UNDERSTANDING DISCONTENT

A. DISCONTENT DEFINED...

1. According to the American Heritage dictionary: Absence of contentment; dissatisfaction; a restless longing for better circumstances
2. There appears to be two different kinds of “discontent”...
 - a. “There are two kinds of discontent in this world: the discontent that works, and the discontent that wrings its hands. The first gets what it wants, and the second loses what it has.” - Gordon Graham
 - b. It is the discontent that “wings its hands” that we are discussing in this lesson
 - 1) It is the absence of contentment as a result of covetousness
 - 2) It is that dissatisfaction which is often accompanied by grumbling and complaining

B. THE DANGER OF DISCONTENT...

1. **It affects our relationship with God!**
 - a. When we are discontent because of covetousness, we become idolaters! - cf. **Ep 5: 3-5; Co 3:5**
 - b. When we are discontent because of dissatisfaction with what we have, are we not being ungrateful for what God has given us?

- 1) “Whenever you find yourself disposed to uneasiness or murmuring at anything that is the effect of God’s providence, look upon yourself as denying either the wisdom or goodness of God.” - William Law
 - 2) “Complaining about our lot in life might seem quite innocent in itself, but God takes it personally.” - Erwin W. Lutzer
2. **It hurts ourselves!**
- a. Contentment is a virtue that is highly praised and valued:
 - 1) “He is richest who is content with the least.” - Socrates
 - 2) “He who is content can never be ruined.” - Chinese proverb
 - 3) “The contented man is never poor, the discontented never rich.” - Unknown
 - 4) “*...godliness with contentment is great gain.*” - **1 Ti 6:6**
 - b. But discontentment hurts those who possess it:
 - 1) “Those who want much are always much in need.” - Horace
 - 2) “It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, who is poor.” - Seneca
- We only make ourselves unhappy by being discontent
3. **Those discontented also hurt others!**
- a. When we are discontent, we become grumblers and complainers
 - 1) Affecting our friends, families, and brethren
 - 2) Ruining not only our own selves, but those closest to us
 - b. Nothing destroys a friendship and congregation quicker than the grumbling and murmuring of those discontent
 - 1) “Grumbling is the death of love.” - Marlene Dietrich
 - 2) Which may be why such complaining is condemned in the Scriptures - **1 Co 10:10; Ph 2:14-15**

[So much unhappiness is the result of discontent in our own lives. If we wish to overcome discontent, we must look to the One who helps us overcome the world...]

II. FAITH IN JESUS HELPS US TO OVERCOME DISCONTENT

A. JESUS PROVIDES CONTENTMENT...

1. Through **His teachings...**
 - a. By telling us what is truly important in life
 - 1) Not material abundance - **Lk 12:13-15**
 - 2) But being rich toward God! - **Lk 12:16-21**
 - b. By telling us to lay up our treasure in heaven
 - 1) For earthly treasures will decay or be stolen - **Mt 6:19**
 - 2) Whereas treasures in heaven are safely guarded - **Mt 6:20; cf. 1 Pe 1:4**
- Thus ensuring that our hearts are set upon that which cannot be destroyed - **Mt 6:21**
2. Through **His promises...**
 - a. Promising to always be with us - **Mt 28:20; cf. He 13:5-6**
 - b. Promising God’s providential care - **Mt 6:30-33; 7:7-11; 10:29-31**

B. THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, THE CHRISTIAN CAN BE CONTENT...

1. Even as Paul was content - cf. **Ph 4:11-13**

- a. It was something he learned as a disciple of Christ!
- b. It was something he had through the power of Christ!
2. It has been said that “Contentment is the power to get out of any situation all there is in it.”
 - a. Paul had certainly made the best of his imprisonment! - cf. **Ph 1:12-14**
 - b. He saw how his circumstances enhanced that which was truly important - the spread of the gospel!
3. It has also been said that “Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have.”
 - a. If anyone realized how blessed he was, it was the apostle Paul!
 - b. For he served his God who could supply all one’s needs! - cf. **Ph 4:19**
 - c. Even when he knew his life was near its end - cf. **2 Ti 4:18**

CONCLUSION

1. **“All the world lives in two tents - content and discontent.”**
 - a. Which “tent” do you live in?
 - b. Paul, as a disciple of Jesus, lived in a constant state of contentment
 - c. A contentment learned and enjoyed through his relationship with God through Jesus Christ
2. He encourages us to follow his example, if we desire to have the same relationship with God - cf. **Ph 4:9**
 - a. To learn of his **“ways in Christ”** which he taught in every church - **1 Co 4:16-17**
 - b. Such “ways” certainly included those taught by our Lord Himself!

If we desire to overcome discontent, then let’s be inspired by the example of Paul who wrote:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Ga 2:20)

When one can truly say they “live by faith in the Son of God”, then **“Faith Is The Victory!”** in overcoming discontent!

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Fear

INTRODUCTION

1. In preparing His disciples for His imminent arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus sought to reassure them by expressing His own confidence:

“Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. (Jn 16:32)

2. Though troubling days were ahead, Jesus offered them hope that in Him they too could have peace, for He had overcome the world:

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33)

3. Jesus demonstrated through His death and resurrection that He had indeed overcome the world, and now such victory is offered to His disciples...
 - a. To those who believe, their faith can be the victory to overcome the world! - **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - b. As we have already seen, faith in Jesus helps us in overcoming sin, anxiety, boredom, depression, despair and discontent-- **Through His actions, past and present, and through His teachings, Jesus helps those who believe in Him to overcome the world!**

4. Such victory also includes overcoming “**fear**”...
 - a. Whether real or imagined
 - b. Which like some forms of anxiety (e.g., panic disorders), can have a debilitating effect on peoples’ lives
5. Not all fear is harmful, however; there is to be a place in the heart of the Christian for the right kind of fear...
 - a. Jesus taught us whom to fear - **Mt 10:28**
 - b. Paul wrote of the need for a “*fear and trembling*” - **Ph 2:12; cf. 2 Co 7:1**

[When we properly understand Whom to fear, and how faith in Jesus dispels the wrong kind of fear, then we can overcome any fear or phobia that would rob us of the peace Jesus offers. With that in mind, let’s examine the subject of fear...]

I. UNDERSTANDING FEAR

A. FEAR DEFINED...

1. According to the American Heritage dictionary:
 - a. A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger
 - b. Extreme reverence or awe, as toward a supreme power
2. As the above definition suggests, there are two different kinds of fear...
 - a. One is wrong, which we are addressing in this lesson
 - b. The other is necessary, as stressed in the Book of Proverbs
 - 1) The “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of knowledge - **Pro 1:7**
 - 2) The “fear of the Lord” will cause one to hate evil - **Pro 8:13**
 - 3) The “fear of the Lord” will prolong life - **Pro 10:27**
 - 4) The “fear of the Lord” provides strong confidence and is a fountain of life - **Pro 14:26-27**
 - 5) The “fear of the Lord” prompts one to depart from evil - **Pro 16:6**
 - 6) The “fear of the Lord” leads to a satisfying life, and spares one from much evil - **Pro 19:23**
 - 7) The “fear of the Lord” is the way to riches, honor, and life! - **Pro 22:4**
 - c. The value of fearing God, as expressed by others:
 - 1) “The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.” - Oswald Chambers
 - 2) “The right fear is the fear of losing God.” - Meister Eckhart

B. THE WRONG KIND OF FEAR...

1. **Fear which is groundless**
 - a. Many social and specific phobias fall into this category
 - b. Here is a list of the most common fears, and the percentage of people which fear them...

Top 12 Fears	Scientific Name
1) Speaking before a group (40%)	Topophobia
2) Heights (30%)	Acrophobia
3) Insects and bugs (20%)	Entomophobia
4) Financial problems (20%)	Atephobia
5) Deep Water (20%)	Bathophobia
6) Disease (20%)	Phathophobia
7) Death (20%)	Thanatophobia
8) Flying (20%)	Aerophobia
9) Loneliness (15%)	Monophobia
10) Dogs (10%)	Cynophobia
11) Driving/riding in a car (10%)	Ochophobia
12) Dark (10%)	Nyctophobia

-- Charles J. Givens, Super-Self (Simon & Schuster, 1993), p. 288.

- c. Such fears are often the result of misinformation
 - d. “**FEAR** is **False Education Appearing Real**” (Denis Waitley)
2. **Fear that makes problems seem greater than they really are**
 - a. “Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.” - German proverb
 - b. “Fear makes man believe the worst” - Unknown
 - c. With exaggerated fears of the problems we face, we think them overwhelming

3. **Fear that prevents us from enjoying the blessings we have**
 - a. “He who fears death cannot enjoy life.” - Spanish proverb
 - b. “Who lives in fear will never be a free man.” - Horace
 - c. Certainly one who fears cannot be at peace and know true joy
4. **Fear that hinders our ability to be of service to God**
 - a. “Fear is the sand in the machinery of life.” - E. Stanley Jones
 - b. Fear of people, fear of failure, often hinder many Christians in their service; e.g., personal evangelism
5. **Fear that motivates us to disobey God**
 - a. Certain fears often prompt us to do things which are displeasing to God
 - b. For example, in a poll of teenagers, among other things they feared as followed:
 - 1) Failing in School - 44%
 - 2) Loneliness - 33%
 - 3) Not Having a Boyfriend/Girlfriend - 30%
 - 4) Rejection - 28%
 - c. Such fears have often led young people to cheat, get in with the wrong crowd, give in to improper sexual advances
 - d. Similar fears have prompted many adults to lie, cheat on the job, commit adultery, enter unscriptural marriages, etc.
 - e. Fear of rejection, fear of persecution, etc., has led some Christians to denounce their faith in God

[Unless we can overcome the wrong kind of fear, the devil will have many weapons in his arsenal to use against us. If we are going to be victorious over him and also overcome the world, then we will have to understand how...]

II. FAITH IN JESUS HELPS US TO OVERCOME FEAR

A. JESUS TAUGHT THAT FEAR IS INDICATIVE OF LITTLE FAITH...

1. When His disciples were fearful of the storm at sea - **Mt 8:23-27**
 2. When Peter faltered as he went to Jesus walking on the water - **Mt 14:25-33**
 3. As Jesus taught them not to have fearful anxiety concerning the necessities of life - **Lk 12:27-32**
- **As someone put it: “Fear is simply unbelief parading in disguise.”**

B. JESUS ADDRESSED OUR WORST FEARS...

1. **The fear of what we might face in this life**
 - a. Jesus promised, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* - **Mt 28:20**
 - b. With such a promise, we can take courage, as Joshua was encouraged to do - cf. **Josh 1:9**
 - c. With the Lord at our side, what can man do? - cf. **He 13:5-6**
 - d. The worst that can happen is death, and Jesus addressed that...
2. **The fear of death**
 - a. His own victory over death frees us from the fear of death - cf. **He 2:14-15**
 - b. Thus Paul could face death with great confidence, even anticipation - **Ph 1:21-23**
3. **The fear of what comes after death**

- a. Jesus comforted His disciples with the promise of lies ahead - cf. **Jn 14:1-3**
 - b. Thus Paul could look forward to what he would receive - **2 Ti 4:6-8** (note that it was because he had *“kept the faith”*!)
- **When we’ve overcome these fears through faith in Jesus, other fears will seem petty!**

CONCLUSION

1. Where there is faith, fear cannot abide...
 - a. “Feed your faith, and your fears will starve to death.”
 - b. “Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there.”
 - c. “Fear and faith cannot keep house together; when one enters, the other departs.”-- Vern McLellan, *The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs and Wacky Wit* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996)

2. Here is how Harry Emerson Fosdick contrasted fear and faith:

“Fear imprisons, faith liberates; fear paralyzes, faith empowers; fear disheartens, faith encourages; fear sickens, faith heals; fear makes useless, faith makes serviceable—and, most of all, fear puts hopelessness at the heart of life, while faith rejoices in its God.”

3. If anyone gives us reason to have faith in God, it is Jesus...
 - a. Through His signs and wonders, which God worked in Him
 - b. Through His own resurrection from the dead, proclaiming Him to be the Son of God
 - c. Through the words of His inspired apostles, whose overwhelming testimony gives us reasons to believe in who Jesus was and what Jesus taught

So if we wish to overcome fear, faith in Jesus Christ is the victory!

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Grief

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus promised to provide an “abundant life” when He said:

“...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

2. We have already seen how Jesus provides that abundant life by helping us to overcome many things we face in this world, such as:
 - a. Sin, anxiety, boredom, and depression
 - b. Despair, discontent, and fear-- That is why I am persuaded that **“Faith Is The Victory!”**, as expressed in **1 Jn 5:4-5**
3. Before we conclude this series, I wish to illustrate the victory of faith in Jesus in dealing with two more problems we often face: **grief** and **loneliness**

[In this lesson we shall consider the subject of grief, beginning with...]

I. UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

A. GRIEF DEFINED...

1. According to the American Heritage dictionary: **“Deep mental anguish, as that arising from bereavement”**
2. Synonyms include: sorrow, sadness, mournfulness, gloom
3. The feeling of grief can often be like the feeling of fear, as observed by C. S. Lewis: **“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.”** (A Grief Observed)

B. NOT ALL GRIEF IS WRONG...

1. Jesus manifested grief when He saw how others were grieved over the loss of a loved one - **Jn 11:32-35**
2. Paul wrote of **“a continual grief”** that he had in his heart - **Ro 9:1-2**; cf. **10:1**
3. Having grief and expressing it is an important part of overcoming traumatic experiences such as the loss of a loved one
4. Paul and the Ephesian elders expressed their grief as they bid him a sad farewell - **Ac 20:36-38**

C. GRIEF CAN BECOME A PROBLEM...

1. When it makes one useless for any service
 - a. E.g., when one’s grief sends them into extended isolation
 - b. E.g., when one’s grief makes them unable to comfort others in their grief
2. When it begins to produce a psychosomatic illness

- a. Many physical illnesses are either caused or made worse by emotional distress
- b. Grief is certainly one kind of emotional distress that can take its toll on the body

[So while there is a place for grief in the life and heart of a Christian, it is imperative that grief not take control of our lives. With the help of faith in Jesus, that need not happen...]

II. FAITH IN JESUS HELPS US TO OVERCOME GRIEF

A. JESUS PROVIDES COMFORT TO THE GRIEVING SOUL...

1. As previously noted, Jesus certainly understands our grief
 - a. While in the flesh, He experienced grief - **Jn 11:35**
 - b. Indeed, He became flesh to be better suited to come to our aid - **He 2:17-18**
2. He therefore taught His disciples how to find comfort when troubled
 - a. To believe in Him - **Jn 14:1-3**
 - b. To keep His commandments, that we might abide in His love - **Jn 15:10-11**
 - c. To pray, that we may have joy and peace - **Jn 16:24,33**; cf. **Ph 4:6-7**
3. He also provides comfort with the promise of our resurrection - cf. **1 Th 4:13-17**

B. JESUS PROVIDES A FAMILY TO HELP BEAR OUR GRIEF...

1. Those who believe in Jesus and do His will are part of a family - cf. **Mt 13:46-50**
 - a. That family is the family of God, the church - **1 Ti 3:15**; cf. **5:1-2**
 - b. In which we have “a hundred fold” brothers, sisters, mothers, etc. - **Mk 10:29-30**
2. As a family, we can bear one another’s grief
 - a. By weeping with those who weep - **Ro 12:15**
 - b. By sharing in each other’s sufferings - **1 Co 12:25-26**
 - c. By comforting one another with the comfort we each receive from God - **2 Co 1:3-5**
3. Sadly, many do not take advantage of this blessing of a family
 - a. E.g., those who think they can get what they need watching religious programs
 - b. E.g., those who may “belong to a church”, but never become involved
 - And so when their grief comes, they must often bear it alone

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus certainly did not intend for us to bear our grief alone...
 - a. He taught us how to have lasting joy and peace, even in the midst of grief
 - b. He died and rose from the dead, that our grief even in death might be temporary
 - c. He now intercedes as our High Priest, to comfort us in our times of grief
 - d. He built His church to be a family, so we can receive comfort in times of grief
2. For one to enjoy such blessings, it requires faith in Jesus...
 - a. Faith in Jesus to believe what He taught
 - b. Faith in Jesus to believe what He did
 - c. Faith in Jesus to obey what He commanded that we might abide in His love
 - d. Faith in Jesus to become an integral part of His “church family”

So if we wish to overcome grief through Jesus Christ, then **“Faith Is The Victory!”**

Faith Is The Victory!

In Overcoming Loneliness

INTRODUCTION

1. To the persecuted church in Smyrna, Jesus had His servant John write these words:

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Re 2:10)

2. This promise certainly demonstrates the importance of believing in Jesus...
 - a. For the *“crown of life”* is a figure for the gift of eternal life that Jesus offers
 - b. And if we wish to receive this “crown”, we must remain faithful!
3. But the rewards of faith in Jesus are not limited to **“the afterlife”**...
 - a. There can be victories to be enjoyed even in this life - cf. **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - b. In this series we have noticed how faith in Jesus helps us to overcome such things as:
 - 1) Sin
 - 2) Anxiety
 - 3) Boredom
 - 4) Depression
 - 5) Despair
 - 6) Discontent
 - 7) Fear
 - 8) Grief
4. As we conclude this series, I wish to provide one more example of how faith in Jesus helps us in overcoming the world with its many ills...
 - a. I am referring to the problem of **“loneliness”**
 - b. It is has been said that **“Loneliness and the feeling of being uncared for and unwanted are the greatest poverty”** (Teresa of Calcutta)
 - c. A Jewish proverb states that **“Loneliness eats into the soul”**; it can also have an adverse effect on the body

[As we shall see, faith in Jesus can help us overcome the problem of loneliness; but let’s begin as before by seeking to better understand the problem we face...]

I. UNDERSTANDING LONELINESS

A. LONELINESS IS NOT THE SAME AS SOLITUDE...

1. **Solitude** describes a situation where one is alone by **choice**
 - a. To reflect, meditate, or simply enjoy solitary activities such as writing, drawing, reading
 - b. Every one needs some solitude from time to time
2. **Loneliness** is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the quality and/or quantity of one’s relationships with other people; it can be broken down into two types
 - a. Social loneliness - as when a person goes to college or takes a job in a new town and are isolated from friends and family
 - b. Emotional loneliness - when we feel that we have no one to talk to, no one who understands our deepest concerns and needs

3. Other comparisons between loneliness and solitude:
 - a. Where solitude enriches and energizes, loneliness detracts and debilitates
 - b. Solitude can build a desire to involve one's self with society, whereas...
 - 1) Loneliness often robs one of any such motivation
 - 2) Loneliness can provoke a vicious cycle of despair so that the sufferer shies away from social contact and support needed to overcome
 - c. Perhaps this why it has been said: "Loneliness and solitude are quite different. One is defeat - the other victory."
- **The above notes were taken mostly from the General Loneliness FAQ of the soc.support.loneliness news group**

B. HOW PEOPLE REACT TO LONELINESS...

1. **Active solitude**
 - a. Becoming engrossed in some activity that we enjoy and which enriches our lives
 - b. Such as listening to music, reading, exercising
 - c. This is a positive reaction to loneliness
 2. **Social action**
 - a. Such as calling or visiting a friend a relative; or helping someone less fortunate
 - b. It is a deliberate action that breaks the isolation and involves us with others
 - c. This too is a positive reaction to loneliness
 3. **Distraction**
 - a. Doing something to take our minds off our sense of loneliness
 - b. Such as going for a drive, or going shopping
 - c. This is a more neutral reaction, and really only a temporary solution
 4. **Sad passivity**
 - a. Where one continues to feel badly and does nothing to positively impact the problem
 - b. This can lead to a downward spiral of depression, and often includes sleeping too much, overeating and self-medicating
 - c. This, of course, is a negative reaction to loneliness
- **The notes in this section come from an article by Rona Subotnik, M.F.C.C., who refers to a book called "In Search of Intimacy", by Rubenstein and Shaver**

C. CHRISTIANS NEED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO LONELINESS...

1. For being lonely may be a symptom of a more serious problem
 - a. "Loneliness is being unaware of the One who is with us everywhere."
 - b. "Many Christians suffer from loneliness because they are sitting instead of serving."
-- Croft M. Pentz, *The Complete Book of Zingers*
2. When one walks with God, they are never truly alone - cf. **Jn 16:32**
 - a. "The soul that has been enriched by communion with God will not be dismayed by isolation but will welcome solitude. He will seek not the crowd but the closet, and emerging will never walk alone, for he has unseen companionship." - Frances J. Roberts
 - b. "The soul that is growing in holiness is the least lonely when it is most alone." - F. Andrew
-- Edythe Draper, *Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World*

[When one suffers from loneliness, it is an indication that relationship with God and others may need

some work. There is no one better qualified to help us in that regard than Jesus Christ...]

II. HOW FAITH IN JESUS OVERCOMES LONELINESS

A. JESUS RECONCILES US BACK TO GOD...

1. Paul explained that Jesus' ministry was one of reconciliation - **2 Co 5:18-20**
 2. Jesus offered Himself as the only way to God - **Jn 14:6**
 3. When we keep Jesus' commandments, we are assured of the abiding presence of both the Father and the Son - **Jn 14:21,23**
- **Through faith in Jesus, we can be reconciled to God and never be truly alone!**

B. JESUS ADDS US TO HIS FAMILY...

1. We read where Jesus added people to the church - **Ac 2:47** (KJV, NKJV)
 2. This "church" is also described as God's house, or family - **1 Ti 3:15**; cf. **5:1-2**
 3. Indeed, Jesus told Peter what His disciples would enjoy in this lifetime, which I understand to be a reference to His church - cf. **Mk 10:28-30**
- **Through faith in Jesus, we are born into a spiritual family where we should never be alone**

C. JESUS' WOULD HAVE US RESPOND POSITIVELY TO LONELINESS...

1. He teaches us to pray, which builds companionship with God
 - a. To pray always, and never lose heart - **Lk 18:1**
 - b. To pray to our Father in secret, where you are one on one with Him - **Mt 6:5-6**
 2. He teaches us to serve, which builds companionship with others - **Mt 20:25-28**
 - a. One cannot be alone when they are busy serving others!
 - b. Remember, "Many Christians suffer from loneliness because they are sitting instead of serving."
- **Through faithful obedience to Jesus, we will establish and nourish relationships whereby we will never be alone!**

CONCLUSION

1. Just as Jesus was never alone (**Jn 16:32**), so Paul experienced the reassuring presence of God...
 - a. At a time when others had forsaken him - **2 Ti 4:16-17**
 - b. Which gave him hope for the future - **2 Ti 4:18**
2. As Christians, we are promised never to be left alone...
 - a. *"...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* - **Mt 28:20**
 - b. *"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"* - **He 13:5-6**

Add to such wonderful promises the blessings of being a part of God's family, the church, and truly we should be able to say to overcoming loneliness, and to overcoming any problem we face:

"Faith Is The Victory!"