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Greater Is He That Is in You

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." — 1 John 4:4

Summary:

Believers belong to God not merely as creatures fashioned by his power, but as people renewed by his grace. They have received a new heart, life, and spiritual nature. Their victory is real, though the Christian life remains a struggle: God has already carried them through many battles, and the final outcome is certain. This victory does not depend on their own strength, since their enemies are greater than they are. Rather, it rests on the One who dwells within them, who is infinitely greater than Satan and every worldly power. His truth is stronger than error, his grace surpasses nature, and his Spirit preserves the work he has begun. This should inspire gratitude for past preservation and confidence in the future. Rejecting self-reliance, believers can find strength in the Lord and trust that sin, the world, and Satan will ultimately be overcome.

Outline:

1. **Believers are of God by grace**
    - They are not only created by God but renewed by him with a new heart and life.
2. **Their victory is already real**
    - Past battles have been won, and God's certain promise lets us speak of future triumph as complete.
3. **The power is not their own**
    - Christians are weak before their enemies, but their indwelling Friend and Keeper is almighty.
4. **God's Spirit secures the heart**
    - Truth overcomes error, grace rises above nature, and the Spirit subdues the powers of disobedience.
5. **Grace calls for gratitude and confidence**
    - Past preservation demands praise, while God's sufficiency gives courage for every future conflict.

Text

How fitting to tell them of their relation to God: "Ye are of God, little children." In one sense, all are, for God made us. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. He clothed us in skin and flesh, strengthened us with bones and sinews, and formed not only our bodies but our spirits.

Believers are of God not only as creatures of his power and providence, but as subjects of his grace: formed and renewed by him. "This people," he says, "have I formed for myself." They are his workmanship, new creatures with a new being, heart, and life; all things are new. In this, they are of God—"Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

How encouraging to announce their victory—"And ye have overcome them." They had not merely resisted but vanquished. Yet were their foes slain, their weapons laid aside, and they returning home in triumph? Is not the Christian life warfare to the end? As long as Christians live, are they not still armed and engaged? Yet John speaks as if the battle were won.

Because the conquest is partly accomplished, they have won many battles and said, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." The rest is certain; Scripture therefore sometimes speaks of the future as though it were the past. Centuries before the Messiah's incarnation, Isaiah declared, "Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given!"

Well, therefore, the believer may say, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory." "Yea, in all these things, we are more than conquerors." How wisely they were reminded of the reason for their success: "Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Their success was not due to themselves—they were not greater; indeed, they were nothing before their enemies. But though they were nothing to their enemies, their enemies were nothing to their Friend and Keeper, the Lord.

The prince and god of this world is nothing to the Lord of all, who is for, near, and within those who call upon him. If one is mighty, the other is Almighty—infinitely greater in himself, his agency, his dwelling, and his subjects.

He instills in them principles stronger than those their enemies uphold, despite the enemies' earlier presence and support from all around. Otherwise, how could they have gained the heart? "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him,

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he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." And how could they keep possession when their subdued foe constantly strives to regain his former power?

Truth is stronger than error, grace above nature, and God's Spirit in his people can subdue the spirit at work in the children of disobedience. Let this shape your gratitude: many who seemed likelier to stand have fallen, yet you remain. Though darkness has opposed you since your religious journey began, your heart has not turned back, nor have your steps strayed from his ways.

To whom should you give glory? You have often said, "I shall one day perish"; left to yourself, you would have perished long ago. But here is the secret—"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The truth that explains your past standing also reveals your future reliance: one calls for praise, the other inspires confidence. Looking ahead, you need strong consolation—and there is enough to give it.

Renounce self-reliance; be strong in the Lord and his might. Rely on his grace for all you need, and you will not be confounded. Everything else must yield. "he that is born of God overcometh the world." "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 27, Evening), first published in 1854.