

Always Winning

1 John 5:1-5

Preface

Pam and I were watching the Barnwell Baptist Church softball team playing last Monday night. We only stayed for the first game which ended in a tie. As we were walking away we were discussing what a good game it was. Pam said “I wish they could win some games.” I responded by saying, **“They are winning whether they realize it or not.”**

The team hasn't had a winning season by softball standards. However, they have had a great winning season in areas of much more importance. As I look at the team, I see wonderful things happening. The softball team has been a good way for young and middle-aged men to bond in Christian brotherhood. New church members have made friends and been made to feel at home. And perhaps most importantly, other teams are observing a BBC softball team of Christian men who are a living testimony of Christ in their lives. I am proud of our softball team and the work they are doing for Christ. **They are winning in the game that really matters – showing evidence of a living Lord.**

Paul writes in Romans 8:28, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* Romans 8:28 NIV

When we trust in Christ and place our faith in living for Him, we are assured to always be winners even when it appears to the world that we are losing.

Scripture – Read

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ²This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

1 John 5:1-5 NIV

Introduction

Illus: I was told this week about a Satsuma man who passed away on Monday. At the age of 25 Bert Woodard was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. The doctors gave him only 2 to 5 years to live. However, Bert lived with the crippling disease for 28 years before he went to be with the Lord on Monday.

Some might say for 28 years Bert fought a losing battle; but not so. Bert lived a winning life for 28 years trusting God and living for Him in spite of his terminal disease. Many people around the country have been inspired by Bert's commitment to life and his testimony for God.

On a ventilator and feeding tube, Bert wrote a book by typing on a special computer with his feet. The title of the book is “Living With It – Not Dying of It.” Bert Woodard is an example of “Always Winning” when you are a child of God.

Even when we think we are facing insurmountable trials and difficulties, if we keep our faith and trust in the Lord, we are guaranteed to be winning. God is never forsaking us as He is working all things in our life for good.

For the believer, God is constantly bringing people and experiences (yes good and bad) into our life for the purpose of bringing us to His divine will and purpose.

How can we know we are always winning regardless of what is happening around us?

Our text provides the answer: **Love God & Love Others.**

Content

1. Loving God – Obeying His Commands

God never stops loving us. There is never any question about that. The Bible says, *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 8:38-39 NIV

So God's love for us should never be in question. But our love for God does come into question. We must ask ourselves if we truly love God with all of our heart, soul and mind.

Loving God is crucial to the Christian life. Our text reads *“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,” vs.3*

Illus: Have you ever been eating or drinking something and happen to read the ingredients only to read that it doesn't contain the very item you thought you were buying? The label led you to believe you were drinking real fruit juice but it turns out it is water with sugar and flavoring to make it taste and look like the real thing - but it isn't the real thing.

If you are the real thing - a Christian who loves God, you will keep His commands. In other words your love for God will compel you to be faithful and live in accordance to God's word.

Loving God means not picking and choosing what portions of the Bible to believe but accepting it entirely as His word.

Loving God means addressing the difficult commands like forgiveness, faithfulness, honesty, generosity and service.

Loving God means digging deep into your heart and asking yourself, “Am I really an example of someone who loves God by keeping His commandments.

Notice that if we love God and exercise faith, **keeping His commands will not be burdensome.** If we are truly born again, we will have the power to overcome the temptation and ways of the world. This is what it means to be a Christian.

Illus: I will soon be a grandfather. I'm sure I will join the many other grandparents I have seen who make complete fools of themselves as they dote and carry on over their grandchildren. What makes grown men and women giggle, dance around and make odd sounds in front of their grand babies? It is love. Love makes us do things that otherwise seem unnatural. Such should be the result of our love for God.

Loving God means we laugh with God, weep with God and rejoice with God. Loving God means never letting our relationship with Him become routine, musty or “old hat.”

Victory resides in everyone born of God. Every believer has already been given the victory to overcome the world.

By loving God, we are winning in all circumstances.

2. Loving Others - His Children

A person who loves God and obeys His commands will be found doing what is right, both toward God and toward his fellow man. Being a Christian involves loving God but it also involves loving God's children.

In Matthew 22 Jesus is asked a question by one knowledgeable of the law. He asks, “Which is the greatest commandment in the law?” The answer Jesus gave is significant.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Matthew 22:37-39 NIV

Jesus then states that all of the law hangs on these two commandments. He makes love for God and our neighbor the foundation our responsibility as Christians.

Loving God's children is not a mere sentiment or verbal expression. It involves much more. Loving God's children involves action. It even includes the willingness to sacrifice for others. We are to love others above ourselves.

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” 1 John 3:17 NIV

Illus: I read a story about a Highway Patrolman by the name of Odie Butler who came upon a single vehicle accident on a busy highway. He found a woman thrown from her truck with blood all over her. She was gasping for breath and bleeding from the mouth. As he tried to assist her, people were passing by shouting at him. They were shouting things like, “get this stuff out of here” and “clear the road.” People were in a hurry and bothered by the inconvenience of having to weave around the wreckage. Eventually one man stopped to help until the helicopter came to get the woman. Butler later stated that he was prepared for the carnage and blood that he found at the site. But he was not prepared for the anger of people who were willing to place their meetings and appointments above human life.

As Christians, we are called to love God's children, not just our family but all of God's children. We are to show kindness, patience and a willingness to help. We are the body of Christ and we are commanded to be united as one body in love for others.

John was there when Jesus answered that question about which law was the greatest. He later summed it up in his writing;

“And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.” 1 John 4:21 NIV

Loving others cannot be forged, it must be genuine. Our love for God should inspire us and compel us to love others. When we do, we will always be winning in matters that count.

Conclusion

I’ll go back to the BBC softball team. What if one person comes to know Christ as a result of the team this year? How great of a victory will that be? I think you will agree, that would be greater than any victory in any sport.

What if one or two people become more committed Christians because of the discipleship and example of our team? A Christian life is far more valuable than winning a ball game.

What if some life-long friendships are made as a result of the team? The friendships will last long after anyone can remember the score of the Monday night game.

Oh that we could grasp the concept that God wants to work through us in every aspect of our life.

If we will love God and love others, we will always be winning in the kingdom’s business. That’s the game we can’t afford to lose.