

Overcoming the World!

By J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

Our **three great spiritual enemies** are . . .
the **world**,
the **flesh**, and
the **devil**,

It is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say, that at no former period has "the world" been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ's Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that "worldliness" is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era.

The **subtle influence of the world**, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe! It creeps into families and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves!

The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of **self-indulgence**, and the immense growth of a passionate relish for **recreations and amusements** of all kinds--all these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ's ministers to cry aloud, "Beware of the world!"

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the Word of the living God does not change!

"Do not love the world!"

"Do not be conformed to this world!"

"Friendship with the world is enmity with God!"

These mighty sayings of God's statute-book remain still unrepealed. The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience.

It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man "born of God" will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world. Though "in" the world, he is not "of" the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life--as if they were the sum total of existence. Even in innocent things he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations, and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money-getting, or politics, or scientific pursuits--and **as if there were no life to come!** He can neither be bribed, nor frightened, nor allured into neglecting his soul.

To be at peace with the world is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leads to destruction! We have no choice or option. We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

I charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world, to awake to a sense of their danger! Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence, or love of popularity, are gradually weaving round you! Awake before it is too late --before repeated worldly **acts** have formed **habits**--and habits have crystallized into **character**--and you have become a **helpless slave!**

The "fetters of the world" are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and knows not that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen.

If you love your souls, hold the world at arm's length.

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(Taken from "Victory" by J.C. Ryle)

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