

## AN OVERCOMER'S PERSPECTIVE

- A. Introduction: The night before Jesus was crucified He told His twelve apostles: In the world you will have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world.—I have deprived it of the power to harm, have conquered it for you (John 16:33, Amp).
1. We're considering what Jesus' statement means and how His victory affects our lives. Through His death, burial, and resurrection Jesus has overcome the world—He has deprived this world of power to *permanently* harm us in any way.
    - a. Because of Jesus' victory, every problem, pain, injustice, and loss we experience in this life is temporary and subject to change by God's power—either in this life or the life to come.
    - b. Because of what Jesus did in His death and resurrection, the New Testament refers to Christians as men and women who overcome.
  2. Jesus went to the Cross for us as us. We weren't there when He died and rose again, but what happened there affects us as though we were there. His victory over this world is our victory.
    - a. To overcome or have victory does not mean a life with guaranteed success and few, if any problems. There is no such thing as a problem free life in this sin cursed earth.
    - b. An overcomer is a Christian whose view of reality or perspective on life is based on what Jesus did through His death, burial, and resurrection. This perspective enables us to deal effectively with life's constant struggles. In this lesson we're going to examine an overcomer's perspective.
- B. As with many of our lessons, we need to begin by restating the big picture or God's overall plan. You can't have an overcomer's perspective without seeing the big picture. God created human being to become His sons and daughters and He created this world to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
1. Because of sin (beginning with the first man, Adam), both the family and the family home have been infused with a curse of corruption and death. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.
    - a. Human beings are disqualified for participation in God's family and subject to corruption and death. The earth is filled with chaos and death and is no longer a fit home for God and His family.
      1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for mankind's sin so that all who put faith in Him can be delivered from the guilt and power sin and restored to their created purpose His sons and daughters. John 1:12-13; I John 5:1; etc.
      2. Jesus will come again to cleanse and renew the earth and restore it to a fit forever home for the family. He will deliver it from all corruption and death. Isa 65: 17; Rev 21-22; I Cor 15; etc.
        - A. All who have faith in Him will come from Heaven to be reunited with their bodies raised from the dead and made immortal and incorruptible, to live on this earth again.
        - B. This time, we will live here forever, with life restored what it was always meant to be. Nothing will ever again harm, hurt, or rob from God's family—no more sorrow, pain, loss, or tears. Life will fully triumph over death in all its forms.
    - b. Through His death, burial, and resurrection Jesus began the process of reclaiming and restoring the family and the family home. Life's hardships may hurt us, but they can't overcome us. They can't stop God's ultimate plan for a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters who will live with Him forever on this earth renewed and restored.
  2. To have an overcomer's perspective, we must understand that Jesus didn't come to earth to make this life the highlight of our existence. Jesus died to deliver us from this present evil world. Gal 1:4
    - a. The term translated world is the Greek word for age (*aion*). The emphasis of the word is not on the length of that period, but rather on the spiritual or moral characteristics of that period. We live in the age (or period of time) when things are not the way they are supposed to be because of man's sin

and Satan's rebellion.

b. Not only is there corruption and death everywhere, a kingdom of darkness rules over this world. And, the ruler of this kingdom (Satan) has authority over all who are guilty of sin.

1. When Adam sinned, the governmental structure of the earth was altered. Through his sin Adam surrendered his God given authority in the earth to Satan. The devil became the god (ruler) of this world and established a counterfeit kingdom on earth. Luke 4:6; II Cor 4:4; John 12:31; John 14:30; etc.

2. The New Testament uses another word for world (*kosmos*). It refers to everything that is in opposition to God, everything that is in active persecution against God, everything that draws us away from God, away from glorifying Him.

c. Through faith in Christ we are taken out of the kingdom of darkness that rules (reigns) in this present evil world, taken out from under the authority of sin, Satan, and death. Col 1:13; Acts 26:18

1. Although believers in Jesus are still in the world (in the sense that we still live on this planet in the midst of Satan's kingdom of darkness) we are not of the world. John 15:19—You don't belong to this world (J. B. Phillips, NIV); no longer one with it (Amp).

2. Although the devil's power over all who believe on Jesus was broken at the Cross, the ruler of this world system has not yet been subjugated (removed from all contact with God's family and the family home) nor has the curse of corruption and death been removed from the earth.

A. Right now, we live in hostile territory. We're sojourners passing through this world as it is (I Pet 2:11; I Cor 7:31). We still face all the challenges of life in a broken, fallen world.

B. God's Word (the Bible) gives us wisdom on how to navigate through this world. It helps us discern which challenges we can avoid. And, it gives us insight into how to deal with the challenges we can't avoid (lessons for another day).

3. People try to find a Bible verse that will fix things immediately. And, you may find a verse that gives you insight on how to quickly fix your present problem (although that doesn't usually happen).

a. But you need to know that there's another (possibly even bigger) problem headed your way, because that's life in a sin cursed earth. And there may be no easy answer for your next problem.

b. God, through His written Word (the Bible), changes your perspective. It's not what you see that makes or breaks you in this fallen world. It's how you see what you see. If you can learn to see life in terms of the big picture (the overall plan of God), you'll develop an overcomer's perspective.

C. The Greek word translated overcome in Jesus' statement about overcoming the world (*nikao*) means to conquer or prevail. This same word is used to describe Christians. Overcoming does not mean "no more problems". It means life's problems can't stop God's ultimate purpose and plan for us from coming to pass.

1. Rom 8:37—Paul the apostle (an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord Jesus who was personally instructed by Him) wrote that believers in Jesus are more than conquerors or overwhelming victors (*huperniko*) through Him.

a. Paul made this statement in the context of things that can kill us—persecution, famine, danger, sword, etc (Rom 8:35). Things can kill you but they can't overcome, conquer, or defeat you.

b. Paul experienced all those things in his life as a Christian. Yet he viewed himself as an overcomer in the midst of them. We get insight into his perspective (view of reality) earlier in the chapter.

1. Rom 8:18-19—Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later (at resurrection of the dead) (NLT); The entire universe is standing on tiptoe (the Greek reads in intense anticipation), yearning to see the unveiling of God's glorious sons and daughters (TPT).

2. Rom 8:20-21—For the creation was subjected to (corruption and death), not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (NIV),

3. Rom 8:22-23—We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit (the new birth), groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for...the redemption of our bodies (through resurrection of the dead) (NIV).
- c. Paul recognized that life in this present world is not the way it's supposed to be and that there is more to life than this life. And even though he experienced great hardship and faced death regularly as he preached the gospel, Paul realized that there is restoration and recovery ahead.
2. In II Cor 4 we get more insight into how Paul's perspective or view of reality helped him overcome in the midst of life's hardships.
- a. We aren't going to do a detailed study of the background of this epistle, but we need some context to fully appreciate Paul's perspective on his life. When he wrote this letter he'd recently experienced severe persecution in Asia (modern-day western Turkey) which he referenced in his epistle.
1. II Cor 1:8-9—I think you ought to know, dear friends, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead (NLT).
2. II Cor 4:8-12—We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed or broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be obvious in our dying bodies. So we live in the face of death, but it has resulted in eternal life for you (NLT).
- b. Then Paul clearly stated his perspective on all that had happened. II Cor 4:17-18—For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever. So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever (NLT).
1. Paul realized that in comparison to forever (the life after this life) the hardships of this life are miniscule. And that perspective lightened the load for him. It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see.
2. Perspective makes all the difference. It doesn't lessen the pain of present suffering and loss, but it can help you make it through. Consider an example of how perspective affects us.
- A. When a child suffers the loss of a favorite toy, their heart is truly broken and they feel real pain. But as adults who have a different perspective, we recognize that in terms of an entire life span, loss of a toy is not as catastrophic as it seems in the moment.
- B. I'm not trying to compare life's very real pain and suffering to losing a toy. I'm trying to help you see that when you view life's hardships in terms of the life after this life, that perspective helps you make it through this life.
1. It gives you peace and hope because you know that there is restitution, restoration, and recovery in the life to come. Every loss, heartache, and pain is temporary.
2. The ultimate victory that Jesus won for us on the Cross will be realized—some of it in this life, but the greater and better part of it in the life after this life.
- c. Notice II Cor 4:18—Paul developed and maintained his overcomer perspective by looking at what he could not see. There are two kinds of things we cannot see—invisible things and future things (many lessons for another day).
1. Invisible things include the realities that await us in the life after this life. Living with the awareness that this life is not all there is and that the best is yet to come for those who know the Lord sustains us in the midst of life's hardships.

2. Invisible things also include Almighty God Who is with us, for us, and in us. It includes His invisible kingdom of full power and provision. Almighty God is an ever present help in times of trouble in this life (Ps 46:1).

A. Because of Jesus we are now citizens of that invisible kingdom (Phil 3:20). As citizens, we owe our allegiance its government and are entitled to protection from it.

B. No matter what we face, God by His power and love, will get us through until He gets us out.

d. The only way you can see the unseen is through the Bible (the written Word of God). Paul did not deny what he saw. Instead, he focused his attention on additional information—unseen realities revealed to us through God’s Word. Consider something else Paul wrote.

1. Col 3:1-4—Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven...Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth.

For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God...And when

Christ, who is your real life is revealed to the whole world (at His second coming) you will share in all his glory (NLT).

2. Notice that this is changing the way you think, changing your perspective or view of reality.

That’s what renewing the mind (Rom 12:2) is all about—learning to see things according to the way they really are because of what Jesus has done for us through His resurrection victory.

Nothing can permanently harm us. Therefore we are overcomers.

3. Consider one example from Paul’s life of what it looks like to overcome in the midst of the harsh realities of life in a fallen world. We could (but aren’t going to) do an extensive study of this incident. For now, note these points.

a. Paul was arrested because of issues related to preaching the gospel. He appealed his case to Caesar in Rome (he had that right as a Roman citizen). He was sent from Israel to Rome and, while in

route by ship, he and his escorts encountered a horrific storm in the Mediterranean Sea. Acts 27

1. Why did this great apostle get caught in a terrible storm? Because that’s life in a sin cursed earth. Killer storms are the result of the curse unleashed by Adam’s sin in the beginning. The

fact that the ship was caught in that particular storm was due to a poor choice made by the officer in charge. Acts 27:10-11

2. God spoke to Paul through an angel and told him the ship would be destroyed, but that everyone on board would survive if they followed Paul’s instructions. Acts 27:23-26

3. The ship was destroyed, but the crew made it safely to the shore of Melita (the island of Malta) where they were welcomed and cared for by the local islanders. A poisonous snake bit Paul as

he was gathering firewood, but he shook it off. Paul prayed for a sick man, which led to many others being healed. And many idol worshippers heard about Jesus. Acts 28:1-10

b. This is what overcoming looks like in a fallen world. Even though bad things happened to Paul, he knew that God’s Word is true no matter how it looks or feels and acted accordingly.

1. Paul knew that God would get him through whatever happened until He got him out. And Paul knew that God would use whatever happened to further His purpose and plan to have a family.

2. Paul also knew that if he died, he would temporarily leave his body behind and enter the invisible kingdom of God. While enjoying life in Heaven he would await a return to earth and reunion with his body (through resurrection) to live on this earth again. II Cor 5:1-4

D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. But consider one thought as we close. The complete restoration of the family and the family home will be realized. That reality makes us overcomers no matter what comes our way in this life. Develop an overcomer’s perspective and you’ll have peace and hope in the midst of this dark world. Jesus has won the battle for the world (John 16:33, NIrV).