

To Him That Overcomes

by Chip Brogden

The normal Christian life is a life of overcoming, demonstrating the preeminence of Jesus Christ over all things.

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Victory In Christ"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the significance of overcoming in the Christian life, emphasizing that every believer is called to be an Overcomer, not just a select few with special powers. He highlights that overcoming is about demonstrating the preeminence of Jesus Christ over sin, self, and satan, and not about earthly achievements or positions of power. The sermon delves into the spiritual reality of overcoming, where believers defeat the enemy by showcasing the victory of Christ through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their Testimony, and by not clinging to their own lives. It underscores the importance of abiding in Christ, living out the Truth, and aligning with God's eternal purpose of gathering all things in Christ.

Transcript

"And they overcame [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their Testimony, and they loved not their own lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Whenever I speak or write on the subject of the Overcomers I always preface my remarks by saying that overcoming is the normal Christian life. God has not created an elite group of super-spiritual people within the Church who have some special "anointing" or power. I am well aware that some people teach and believe that the Overcomers are a special class of people that will rise up and exercise great authority over the earthly kingdoms of this world - even over their spiritually immature brothers and sisters. We reject that on the basis that every believer, whether they know it or not, is already complete and is already blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:3).

I pray God will open our eyes to see that God's purpose for the Overcomers is not to establish an earthly kingdom, but to enlarge and increase a spiritual kingdom that is not seen outwardly, but is hidden within each believer (Luke 17:20,21). This is no earthly kingdom, for it is "not of this world" (John 18:36). When Jesus perceived that the people were going to take Him by force and make Him an earthly king, He left them and went up into a mountain, alone (John 6:15). When Peter drew his sword, Jesus told him to put it away. From these examples it should be obvious that overcoming is a heavenly reality, not an earthly achievement or accomplishment.

OVERCOMING IS THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

God's purpose is for Christ to fill all things, beginning with each disciple, and then with the Church as the synthesis of all disciples. Only then will He be able to restore the nations of this world and the whole of Creation. We spend too much time trying to change things outwardly for others before we have truly appreciated what God has done inwardly for us. Every child of God should be a living demonstration of how God will sum up everything beneath the Headship of Christ. The world, the principalities and powers, and creation itself should be able to see in the Church a foreshadowing of what life will be like when Christ is "All in All" (see Ephesians 3:8-11).

Of course, we know that what we have today is an aberration from God's purpose. Even though He has put "all things in subjection under [Christ]", it remains that "we do not yet see all things put under Him" (cf. Hebrews 2:8). That is, looking around outwardly at the Church, the world, and the creation, we do not see the preeminence of Christ. We hardly see it when we examine our own lives. Is Jesus really Lord? Is God truly sovereign? Indeed. He is working "all things after the counsel of His own Will" (Ephesians 1:11b). Obviously this is a progressive thing. He does not suddenly take over the universe, no more than He suddenly takes over each disciple. Children of God are not born fully grown, and Jesus is not building His Church in one day. Instead, He works slowly, almost imperceptibly, increasing and enlarging, gently leading, gradually revealing Himself in a thousand small ways.

So who is an Overcomer? If the Overcomers are not earthly conquerors or crusaders, what are they? Overcomers are simply Christians who live the normal Christian life. That is, the normal Christian life, as God intends, is a life that overcomes. It is not a life that is defeated. So what is the "normal" Christian life? It is a life which demonstrates the preeminence of Jesus Christ over all things.

How do we measure victory or defeat? What characterizes one Christian as an Overcomer, and another Christian as defeated? In Revelation 12:11 we see exactly what an Overcomer is - someone who defeats the dragon. Obviously the dragon symbolizes the devil. We see three arenas of conflict in which Overcomers are made. There is the blood of the Lamb, the word of their Testimony, and "loving not" their lives.

In our article, "THREE ENEMIES" we identified these three areas of conflict as sin, self, and satan. We do not wish to repeat ourselves again here, except to say that the blood of the Lamb overcomes sin, the word of their Testimony overcomes satan, and "loving not" their lives overcomes self. Whatever rises up to challenge us comes from one of these three enemies. They do not present themselves in any particular order, but they come continually. Of these three, I used to believe satan was the most formidable. I now understand that the most formidable enemy is not satan at all, but self, for satan's only strength is self's belief in satan's lie. I know people who are occupied with fighting satan day and night but they have never died to self, so all their fighting is for nothing. Their enemy is within.

Do you believe that Jesus is more powerful than sin? Do you believe that Jesus is more powerful than satan? Do you believe that Jesus is more powerful than self? Certainly Jesus is Lord over all these things. We know He lived a sinless life. We know He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil - indeed, He was revealed in order to destroy the devil and his works (Hebrews 2:14; I John 3:8). We know that He did nothing for self, but always did His Father's will. So we can clearly see Christ has the preeminence over sin, self, and satan. Yet there are "realities" in this present universe which seem to suggest that Jesus is NOT Lord over sin, self, and satan. Now this brings us to the heart of what it

means to be an Overcomer. The one that overcomes is the one that continually defeats the dragon by DEMONSTRATING the preeminence of Christ over sin, self, and satan. You see, this has nothing to do with electing Christians into the highest places of earthly government. That is a comparatively easy task. Here we are speaking of a spiritual conflict of cosmic proportions.

IS JESUS REALLY LORD?

Allow me to illustrate this conflict. What if I were to tell you that Jesus is not really Lord? What if I wrote an article which suggested that the Blood could not cleanse us from sin? Or what if I preached a message and proclaimed that satan is actually stronger than Jesus? Or suppose I sent you a letter in which I confided that the Cross has no power? Would you be upset? Hopefully you would label me as a heretic and would reject me and this teaching forever. You would categorically deny such a teaching in the strongest possible terms, and I would never teach such things anyway.

Yet the way most of us live our lives teaches the universe that Jesus is not really Lord. We do not have to actually SAY with our mouths, "Satan is more powerful than Jesus; sin is more powerful than the Blood; self is more powerful than the Cross." We say it with our lives - every time we willfully sin, every time we give satan an advantage over us, and every time we put self before Christ. Confessing or proclaiming the Truth means nothing by itself. When we do not DEMONSTRATE the Truth we claim with our mouths then we are actually teaching the opposite thing with our actions.

We are full of these contradictions. Let me take a very common and seemingly innocent example such as worry. Most of us, from time to time or nearly all of the time, worry about something - our health, our finances, our loved ones, and so on. Yet the Scriptures say take no thought for your lives and be anxious for nothing. Why is worry a sin? I know we consider it "only human", but worry really implies a lack of trust in God. It is believing a lie. Identify the lie and you can quickly discover the Truth. What is the lie? That God is somehow less than sufficient, that perhaps He will not come through for us. So you see, the enemy gets us to believe a lie, and then gets us to think that we are just being "human". So then we accept something less than the normal Christian life - overcoming - and think that is just the way it is. Remember: satan has no power apart from our belief in his lie.

Overcomers are learning to bridge the gap between what they SAY they believe and how they really LIVE. Now we are not criticizing or judging people for having anxious thoughts, for we have our share of them. We have not overcome in this area. We simply say this is one thing to be overcome, one of many lies which oppose the Truth. The one that overcomes is constantly challenging the lie of the enemy and demonstrating the preeminence of Christ over all things. When every lie is destroyed then the dragon is defeated, for it cannot control what it cannot deceive. Most of what we see and hear is an illusion. It is not the Truth, but a lie, a distortion. Our eyes and our ears cannot be trusted. We must have heavenly vision and heavenly hearing.

For the moment, however, we are confronted with a great disparity, a wide gulf, between things as God intends for them to be and things as they appear to be. We could go down a whole list of items. God says He will meet our needs, but we look and we see that our needs are not met. God says He is the life of our body, but we cannot seem to shake off illness. God says He has destroyed the works of the devil in Christ, but we see the devil working as usual, seemingly unperturbed. And on and on it goes.

What does this mean? Well, it can only mean one of two things, so we have two options. The first option is to give up and just believe that God does not mean what He says. That is the most common response.

The second option is to believe what God says regardless of whether we see it or not. We call this "faith". Faith is not a power we exert in order to change our circumstances, it is an assurance we possess inwardly whether our circumstances are changed or not. The ability to change my circumstances does not make me an overcomer, but to live independently of my circumstances makes me an overcomer. It is living according to "those things that be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17b). If they already "are" outwardly, then we do not need faith, do we (cf. Romans 8:24)?

In other words, if I have no provision, I still believe God is Infinite Supply. If I have poor health, I still believe God is the life of my body. If I am attacked by the devil (even if I am BEATEN by the devil), I still believe the devil is defeated. Yesterday I was thoroughly defeated, but today I say that Christ is Victory. This either makes me a crazy person or a disciple living the normal Christian life. How long will it take before what we believe inwardly is seen outwardly? We do not know. But a LIE is a LIE, whether it is told to us once or whether it is told to us a thousand times. It does not become more true with the passage of time. Here is the problem. We resist a lie the first few times we hear it (e.g., "God will not meet your needs"). But if things do not change we eventually accept the lie as truth (e.g., "Things are no better now than ten days ago, so perhaps God really has forsaken us"). How easy it is for us to believe in a lie - but it is as much a lie the first time we hear it as it is the hundredth time. So why would we ever listen to it later if we did not listen to it earlier? We MUST know the Truth. For the one that overcomes, what is seen OUTWARDLY neither helps nor hinders the TRUTH that has been seen INWARDLY. This is how the Truth makes us free (John 8:32).

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR A DEFEATED CHURCH

Now all of that leads us to this. The Lord says He will have a Church that is without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. A perfect Church. When was the last time you saw the Church, as a whole, anywhere close to this? There are many good brothers and sisters who can articulate what the Church is SUPPOSED to be. We can learn a great deal from them. Then there are many good brothers and sisters who can articulate what is WRONG with the Church, how it falls short of God's purpose. This is not difficult to do, and more and more, people are becoming specialized in this. But very few can take us from what the Church IS (outwardly speaking) and bring us into what God INTENDS for it to be. How do we span the gulf? How do we get from where we are to where God wants us to be? This is seldom talked about, and it seems to be a mystery. But the Book of Revelation is a book that reveals mysteries, and there we find the answer.

There is a principle of God's dealings that we need to recognize, and the whole Book of Revelation itself bears witness to this principle. It is this: whenever the Church is in decline, or is defeated, or is compromised, God has only one remedy, and that is, to bring a fresh revelation, a fresh unveiling, of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1a). He is constantly re-centering us on His Son, because only ONE THING is needed (Luke 10:42).

The ones who overcome are the ones who see Jesus afresh, who keep the Heavenly vision in front of them at all times. The surest way to be defeated is to get your eyes off the ONE THING and get them onto the "many things". The Spirit of Antichrist does not require you to bow down to satan, it only hopes to cloud your vision of Christ. The problem with the Church today is that we lack this seeing of Christ. We have lost sight of Him, and in His place we have programs, church services, end-times predictions and interpretations, plus and a million-and-one other things that all add up to "zero" without Christ. Even worse, we think those things ARE Him.

In the Book of Revelation we see that Jesus walks IN THE MIDST of the candlesticks. This is important. So many people carry on the business of the Church as if Jesus left the whole thing to them to run while He simply stands on the sidelines, nodding His approval every so often. In fact, Jesus is not on the other side of the universe, but He walks in the midst of the candlesticks, building His Church, and to every one of us He says, "I KNOW your works!"

"I was on the Isle of Patmos... because of the Testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 1:9b). "They overcame the dragon by... the word of the Testimony" (Revelation 12:11ff). "The dragon... went to make war with the remnant... which keep the commandments of God, and have the Testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). "The Testimony of Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). We should see how this entire conflict evolves around THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS. It is the focal point between Heaven and Earth, Light and Darkness, Christ and Antichrist. But what is the Testimony of Jesus? It is the demonstration (not merely the proclamation) of the Truth concerning Jesus in all His fullness, in all His preeminence. It is showing forth the centrality of Christ in each disciple, in the Church, and ultimately, in all Creation. Overcomers SEE this in advance of its fulfillment, and they align themselves with this tremendous energy of God that is bringing ALL THINGS into subjection to Christ. They see this as a present Truth and not a future hope, and THAT is why they are Overcomers.

When we SEE an ever-increasing Christ Who is destined to fill all things then we will be delivered from smallness and narrow-mindedness. We do not overcome a thing by focusing our attention and directing our energies against that THING. "Things" will keep us busy from morning until night, and from night until morning. May God deliver us from "things" and show us His Son! We must learn to keep the focus of our heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, Who MUST increase. Then there is no room for "things" anymore. They are simply swallowed up in Victory.

Over six years ago I asked the Lord to teach me about spiritual warfare. God did not respond by teaching me about spiritual warfare, and praise the Lord that He did not. Instead, He simply revealed Jesus Christ to me. This revelation was, and is, sufficient. Seeing Him seated in the heavenly places, and me seated with Him (Ephesians 2:6), was enough to make me an Overcomer. Then I saw that who I am or what I know or what I can do means nothing, but Who He is and what He knows and what He can do is everything. The focus shifted off of "me" - my needs, my problems, my ministry, my spiritual warfare - and onto Christ, where it belonged.

Up until that time I did not know what it was to see the dragon defeated. When I read how the Overcomers would defeat the dragon, I thought how wonderful it would be in the future when that would be possible. But when the Lord revealed Himself to me I saw that He is not the God of "future-tense", but EMMANUEL, God with us, in past, present, and future. I suppose anyone can overcome after they have visited heaven, seen the angels, talked to Jesus face-to-face, and been clothed with their spiritual body. But Overcomers have glimpsed something of heaven already and are bringing it into this earth TODAY. "As in heaven, so in earth" is an everyday thing. Do we really understand the implications?

Many people write to me and ask how to deal with this thing or that, how to get the victory here or there. May I say that it does not matter what your need is, or what your problem is, the Answer is the same. Victory is a Man, not an experience. If you must fail a hundred, a thousand, or a million times in order to learn that lesson then it is worth it. It does not matter whether you understand it, agree with it, believe it, or see it yet. Indeed, everything else seems to say the opposite. But you will see, just as I have seen, that Victory, Grace, Strength, Peace, Love, Light, and Life are not "things", they are Christ, and having the

Man, you have everything the Man is.

SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter... The seven candlesticks... are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:19,20b).

Now that we have identified the role and the characteristics of the Overcomers, it would be inspirational for us to examine the several promises made "to him that overcomes". To do so, we turn to the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation.

We are familiar with the seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These seven churches are a representative number, to be sure. First, they symbolize seven types of believers found within the Church at any given time. Second, they represent seven distinct ages of church history. Third, and most obvious, they represent seven actual assemblies that were in existence during the time John wrote his letter.

There were not seven distinct letters, each sealed in an envelope, and delivered to each church privately. We know (cf. Revelation 1:11) that the book was one letter which was written and sent to each church openly, along with the rest of the vision. As a result, a believer in Ephesus knew what the Lord was saying to Philadelphia, and a believer in Laodicea knew what was happening in Smyrna, and so forth. The point being that each assembly was incomplete without the other. They may have been distinct, but they did not stand alone. In each we see a piece of the puzzle, but we do not see the entire picture until we put all of them together.

To each church He says, "I know your works." Good, bad, or lukewarm, seven times He says, "I know your works." He walks in the midst, observing. And seven times He says, "To him that overcomes." The Lord still calls forth overcomers, and the promises (and warnings) are as applicable to us today as they were to them in their day. As we look at each promise, I pray the Lord will stir us up and draw us out.

THE TREE OF LIFE

"To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7b).

I have called these "promises", but a better word might be "evidences". We tend to see a promise as a future thing, something we have to wait for. I like evidences better, because if something is evident in my life then it is the demonstration of something which is mine already. The Lord says when we live as overcomers our lives will be characterized by certain evidences. By these we know who the Overcomers are, and we know if we are indeed living the normal Christian life - which is a life of overcoming.

The first evidence is that the Overcomers eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Immediately we go back to the Book of Genesis and see that Adam was originally driven out of the paradise of God, Eden, and no longer had access to the tree of life. The tree of life was blocked by angels and a flaming sword (Genesis 3:24). Because Adam ate from the tree of knowledge, he was prohibited from eating from the tree of life.

We should see that Christ does more than restore what Adam lost. He goes beyond Adam, offering the Overcomers fruit from the tree of life, fruit Adam knows nothing about. Obviously this is symbolic

language, but what does it mean? The tree of life represents the Cross, for from that Tree the Lord yielded up His Life for us all. Those who overcome have learned that fruitfulness and life come from death to Self, and that is what the Cross means. The Cross is a tree of life to those who embrace it.

Like Adam, we can choose to eat from either tree, but we cannot eat from both. Adam sinned when he fell into the flesh and yielded to his Self-life. He rejected the tree of life in favor of something that was "good... pleasant... and desirable" (Genesis 3:6ff). The Cross does not look like a tree of life at all. It is neither good, nor pleasant, nor desirable. It looks like death. Perhaps this is why Adam did not eat from it first. But God's End is not death, regardless of appearances: God's End is life out of death, which is resurrection. To eat of the fruit of the tree of life is to glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ and find life out of death. It is becoming popular to preach and teach about the Cross these days, but how many are eating of its fruit? Can we really see the Cross as the TREE OF LIFE, and are we eating of its fruit? We will know a true disciple of the Lord, not by words, but by fruit (Matthew 7:20), and the Cross is the tree of life from which this fruit comes.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life... he that overcomes will not be hurt by the second death" (Revelation 2:10b,11b).

The next attribute of the overcomer is Resurrection Life. Those who possess Resurrection Life cannot be hurt by the second death. What exactly IS Resurrection Life? It is life which has passed through death. Since it has already passed through death once, it cannot die again. When Death is defeated, there are no more enemies. And the only way to defeat Death is to die (cf. I Corinthians 15:26; Hebrews 2:14,15).

Practically speaking, Resurrection Life can be seen in our actions and in our words. When some people open their mouths you sense death. Their presence contributes nothing living. Instead, you have a hollow, empty feeling when you are around them. The words may be correct, but there is no life in what they are saying. It is as though you are handling a dead thing. There is no Spirit and Life.

On the other hand, there are brothers and sisters who are naturally very excited, bold, gifted, talented and persuasive. They seem very much "alive", but this is not Resurrection Life either. How so? They have not passed through death yet, and you cannot be resurrected until you have died. They do not have the imprint of the Cross on what they are doing. They have never been broken. They may be naturally gifted at whatever they are doing for the Lord, but they have not yet died. Outwardly speaking they may appear to be doing some good, but the issue is not good versus bad, but life versus death.

Paul says that he "dies daily" that the "life of the Lord may be manifest" (I Corinthians 15:31; II Corinthians 4:11). Thus, the Crown of Life comes to those who lose their life daily in order to gain His Life daily. Overcomers cannot be hurt by death because they have already died - not once, but thousands of times: taking up the Cross daily, denying Self, and following the Lord. Thus, the highest call is not to lay down our physical life as a martyr, but to lay down our Self life as a disciple. We can lay down our physical life in an instant, but to take up the Cross daily is the truest test, and much more difficult. It requires us to be "faithful unto death". This is the secret of the Overcomers.

THE HIDDEN MANNA

"To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except the one that receives it" (Revelation 2:17b).

Here are two more evidences of an overcomer: the hidden manna and a white stone with a secret name. Before we get into a description of these two items we should first note that the manna is HIDDEN and the name is SECRET. The Lord is doing a work, but that work is, for the most part, hidden and secret. If we are always looking for something out in the open and in plain view then we will miss the deeper workings of God below the surface.

So what is the hidden manna? The manna was the bread which fell from heaven and fed Israel in the wilderness. You will recall that the Lord instructed them to put some of the manna into a golden pot and store it in the Ark as a permanent testimony (cf. Exodus 16:33; Hebrews 9:4). Centuries later, Jesus says, "I am the living bread which comes down from heaven... your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and died... but whoever eats of this Bread lives forever" (John 6:51a, 58b). Jesus is the Hidden Christ, bringing forth the Hidden Wisdom, represented as the Hidden Manna, and preserved forever within the Ark of the Testimony. When we speak, are we just bringing a message or a "word", or are we bringing the Lord Jesus Himself? The Overcomers eat of the Hidden Manna and touch Christ directly. The difference between the Person of Christ and a teaching "about" Christ is the difference between the Hidden Manna and the ordinary manna which soon turns to worms.

What does the white stone represent? In ancient times the judge would hand down his verdict by giving the defendant either a white stone (acquittal) or a black stone (condemnation). The white stone meant "life", and the black stone meant "death". The white stone meant "not guilty", and the black stone meant "guilty". Praise God that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Now, anyone can quote that, but not everyone can fully appreciate it. Religion still condemns us and burdens us with a difficult yoke and a heavy burden. But the Lord says, "Not guilty! The Son has made you free, so you are free indeed!" This is the inheritance of all the saints, but it is actually demonstrated in the Overcomers.

Along with this white stone, Overcomers are given a new name that no one else can know. Our Good Shepherd calls each of us by name and leads us Himself (John 10:3). The Lord is fond of changing our name, not only to mark a new beginning, but to more accurately express what He sees us becoming. Abram becomes Abraham, Jacob becomes Israel, Simon becomes Peter, Saul becomes Paul. Each of us are near and dear to His heart, unique to His Purpose. So He gives each of us a white stone with a new name. But this new name is His secret - no one else can know it but you and Him. This speaks of intimacy. The Overcomers keep some things between them and the Lord. They do not tell of all they know. They keep back a portion that is not meant for anyone to know but Him. And so they dwell in the Secret Place of the Most High, treasuring in their heart the things they see and hear.

POWER OVER THE NATIONS

"To him that overcomes, and keeps My works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 3:26-28).

Remember we are discussing evidences of overcoming: not merely future promises, but present realities found in "the one overcoming" (literal Greek). We may overcome today. We need not wait for a future event. Of course, in some sense there will be a literal fulfillment of these promises some time in the future.

But if we are not seeing them fulfilled in us NOW, at least to some degree, then we are not overcoming. Overcomers are overcoming TODAY, so if we are not overcoming then we are missing out on the present reality as well as the future promise.

These verses are rich, but I would like to especially focus on one thing: "To him will I give power over the nations." The language of this passage is identical to Psalm 2. The Father has said that the Son will rule the nations, and now the Son says the Overcomers will rule with Him. What a glorious thing to rule with Christ! But this certainly sounds like a future promise. How could we claim to have power over the nations today?

The secret is found in Matthew 6:10. Jesus says our daily prayers are to include, "Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done: as in Heaven, so in Earth." This is a revolutionary act. It is praying for the establishment of a Kingdom and a Will in which Christ has the preeminence as All in All. In this Kingdom there is no room for any earthly government, ruler, or king. In this Will there is no room for any human agenda. We know Jesus is Lord, yet we do not see all things submitted to Him (Hebrews 2:8b). So what do we do in the meantime? Overcomers do not just passively wait for Jesus to come back. They pray for His Kingdom to be established and for His Will to be performed. In this way they exercise power over the nations by preparing the way of the Lord. How? By raising up valleys, bringing down mountains, making the crooked things straight, and making the rough ways smooth (Luke 3:5,6). So this prayer is destructive in a natural sense, but constructive in a spiritual sense, for as the nations are decreased, Christ is increased (cf. John 3:30).

Just as Jeremiah was set over nations and kingdoms "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10), so we have received this authority also. We do not serve in a governmental capacity, but in a spiritual capacity, praying for the Kingdom and Will of God to come forth. Such prayer is very weighty and universal. It is beyond the earth, and so it moves the earth. In addition to authority over the nations, we are given "the morning star". Christ is the Morning Star (Revelation 22:16b), the Heavenly Man, Who is higher than the nations and kingdoms of this world. The Morning Star gives Overcomers the heavenly authority which is beyond the influence of the earthly realm in which they must live.

WHITE RAIMENT

"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels" (Revelation 3:5).

Another evidence of our overcoming is being clothed in white. Again, this may have a literal fulfillment in the future, but we need to see how it applies to us as present-day Overcomers. How does one become clothed in white raiment?

The Scriptures say that "fine linen, clean and white" represents "the righteousness of the saints" who have made themselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. Revelation 19:7,8). So we know that white represents righteousness. Now let us ask: how do the saints become righteous? What is righteousness? Is it the sum total of my good works? Is it performing many good deeds? Is it church attendance, Bible reading, praying, and witnessing? According to man's thinking these things may equal up to righteousness, but not according to God's Wisdom. Our own righteousness is as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). So in the Kingdom of God we do not have a "thing" called righteousness that we can attain to. Instead, righteousness is a Person!

"But of [God] are you in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption" (I Corinthians 1:30). This verse does not say wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are special things we must strive for in order to attain. It does not say they are gifts God gives to the faithful. Instead, it says God has placed us in union with Christ and made the Lord Jesus to be our Wisdom. He has made the Lord Jesus to be our Righteousness. He has made the Lord Jesus to be our Sanctification. He has made the Lord Jesus to be our Redemption.

So if white represents righteousness, we have the answer to our question of how we can be clothed in white. Paul says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). This is one of my favorite passages. How do we live righteously? Not by trying to do it in my own strength, but by putting on Christ; by clothing myself with the Lord my Righteousness. Since He is my Righteousness, I simply clothe myself with Him. When we have put on the Lord Jesus then there is no room for the flesh. Our capacity to enjoy sin is decreased until we quite naturally find ourselves living as holy people. This is the only way to overcome sin; thus, the Overcomers are clothed in white, and they have access to the heavenly places. This is why their names are in the Book of Life, and why they may stand before the Father and His angels and be acknowledged as sons and daughters of the Most High God.

A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE

"Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new Name" (Revelation 3:12).

Overcomers are pillars in the temple of God. Like Anna, they do not depart from the temple, but they minister to the Lord day and night (Luke 2:37). Here is what makes someone an Overcomer. It is not a question of how many times can we "attend" something, but whether or not we are abiding at all times. Pillars are an integral part of the structure; if they were to suddenly "go out", the building would collapse.

Too many people serve God according to their calendar. When the calendar says it is Sunday morning, or Wednesday night, or Easter, or Christmas, then they flip the switch and become "spiritual". They might attend a church service or meeting and sing a few songs in hopes of "coming into the presence" of the Lord. When this is over with they flip the switch and go back to their normal lives. The pattern repeats itself each week. This is one reason why churches must use "worship leaders" in an effort to induce people to do something on Sunday because it is totally foreign to them every other day of the week. They come in, and they go out.

What are we saying? That God's highest is not for us to come in and to go out, but to be a pillar. A pillar does not come in on Sunday morning and leave on Sunday night, but is always in the temple. And of course, we do not mean a physical building. Overcomers are pillars in the temple of God, and that is a heavenly matter. However you wish to interpret this, one thing is clear: they have learned how to minister to the Lord continually, regardless of time or place. It is Spirit and Truth worship the Father seeks, and they give Him what He is looking for. There is no holy day or sacred hour or special devotion. They do not have to "come into" the presence of the Lord because they LIVE IN the presence of the Lord continually. And so they overcome the earthly by abiding in the heavenly.

They belong to the Lord, hence, they bear the name of God, the name of the city of God, and the new name of the Lord Jesus. This, in contrast to those who bear the mark of the beast. To bear the Name is to

have the Testimony. When the Name is written upon us then we bear the Testimony within ourselves. It is not so many words that are uttered, but a life that is lived as a pillar in the temple of God, no more to go out.

SEATED WITH HIM IN HIS THRONE

"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

Remember that the one writing this vision, John, once approached Jesus with his brother James and asked if they could each sit on thrones next to the Lord in His Kingdom - one on His right hand, and one on His left. The Lord did not deny their request, but said that they did not understand what they were asking for. He then asked them if they were willing to drink of the cup that He must drink, and be baptized with the baptism that He must be baptized with (cf. Mark 10:35-40).

In Revelation we see that God's thought is not to place one or two special saints on His right hand and on His left hand. Then those positions would be limited to two, and just like the first disciples, we would all be competing against one another for that special place. Instead, the Lord says that the ones who overcome will sit WITH HIM in HIS throne. There is room enough in the Throne for the Father, Jesus Christ, and for every saint that overcomes. Hallelujah! Obviously this is symbolic language - or is it?

Paul tells the Ephesians that God "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). This will not happen after we have died, but has already occurred. How did we arrive at the highest place in the universe, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and name (Ephesians 1:21)? It all begins with "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20a). For if I was crucified with Christ, then I died with Christ. And if I died with Christ, then I was buried with Christ. And if I was buried with Christ, then I was made alive with Christ. And if I was made alive with Christ, then I ascended with Christ. And if I ascended with Christ, then I am seated together with Him in the heavenly places. It is not about me, it is all about Him! Our union with Christ is the way we overcome. There is nothing in me, personally, that overcomes: the secret is "not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20ff).

This is why the Lord says to take up your cross daily, and follow Him. The Throne is only for those who can drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism - that is, be crucified, dead, and resurrected. We only see the cross, so we think this is terrible. But the Lord sees that the cross leads to death, and death leads to resurrection, and resurrection leads to ascension, and ascension leads to being seated with Him in His throne. It is impossible for us to take up the cross and not be resurrected. I am almost afraid to make it so plain lest we fail to appreciate its mystery, but it is all there in the Scriptures. We cannot ascend until we have first descended. Can we embrace the cross, and love the hands that nail us to it, and hold nothing against the One Who put us there? Can we commit our spirit into His hands and give up the ghost of Self, when we see the joy that is set before us?

Just as certainly as the Vine was crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, ascended and seated, so the Branches were crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, ascended and seated. The whole issue is: will we abide in the Vine and share in the overcoming, or not? Overcoming is bound up with abiding. The Lord says, "Live in me, and I will live in you" (John 15:4a). Now the Lord says that overcomers will sit WITH Him in His throne. How is that possible? Because we are IN Him, and He is IN us, so "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17) and "the two shall become one" (Ephesians 5:31, 32ff).

AN ALL-INCLUSIVE INHERITANCE

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7).

What is our idea of overcoming? Is it going forth as a conqueror, forcing the world into submission like a medieval crusader? Not at all. According to God's purpose, Overcomers will inherit all things, not overthrow all things. It is the meek (not the mighty) who inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). It is the Lord Who gains the victory, and gives it to us. We do nothing of ourselves. It is He Who gives us our inheritance. We cannot do anything to obtain an inheritance. It is simply granted to us in the Will. If we are indeed sons and daughters of the Most High God then the inheritance is ours; and if so, then our life on Earth is not our real life, but a preparation for another Life. That is why those who are faithful with a few things HERE will be made rulers over many things THERE (cf. Matthew 25:21).

We know that God's eternal purpose is "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one ALL THINGS IN CHRIST, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Ephesians 1:10). We see the fulfillment of this in Revelation 21. We see a new Heaven and a new Earth. We see the Bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven in order to establish a place on Earth where the Lord may dwell with men. Interpret this however you like, but one thing is clear: the Lord's eternal purpose will be done. ALL THINGS IN CHRIST is not just a piece of poetry Paul employs to sound impressive: it is the aim, purpose, goal, and object of everything God has done, is doing, and will do. And the Overcomers are central to seeing this purpose fulfilled.

Here is what I want us to see: God's purpose is not accomplished in one grand stroke, but comes to pass in degrees: in each disciple first, and then in the Church, and finally in Creation. The reconciliation of Heaven and Earth, God and mankind, is foreshadowed in the Overcomers. In them we see Heaven coming down into Earth every day. We see a Remnant that lives, works, and walks in the Earth while maintaining a Heavenly communion, a Heavenly citizenship, a Heavenly calling, a Heavenly testimony, a Heavenly LIFE. As ambassadors for Christ they represent something foreign to the Earth, but maintain something for Heaven on the land in which they dwell. They already maintain a tabernacle for the Lord within themselves, so they "have no need of a temple" (Revelation 21:22). We see the New Jerusalem in them already, for the glory of God and of the Lamb is their Light (Revelation 21:23). They see His face already, and they serve Him continually.

The cry of the Overcomers is "Father in Heaven! May Your Name be hallowed, may your Kingdom come, may Your Will be done: as in Heaven, so in Earth!" (Matthew 6:9,10). This cry is the very essence of how and why they overcome. While Heaven and Earth are estranged from one another the Will and the Kingdom of God is not fully established. In Revelation we see the End of all things, for then God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the full-knowledge [epignosis] of the Truth [Christ]" (I Timothy 2:4); and, "they shall all know Me, from the least of them, to the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34b). Blessed are they who know Him now, and do call those things that be not as though they were.

A PRAYER FOR THE REMNANT

"And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the Testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17).

Ah Lord God! Religion has kept us from seeing who we really are, and Who You really are. Religion has kept us comfortable, weak, and stupid. We have played "church" for so long. Reveal Your Son to us anew; give us an open Heaven, that we may ascend!

I pray that You will raise up Overcomers: those who will have the Revelation of Christ, and will bear the Testimony of Jesus; who will demonstrate the preeminence of Your Son over sin, self, and satan; who will defeat the dragon by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their Testimony, and by loving not their lives unto the death.

And now, Lord, I have committed this to Your Body. Supply, secure, and strengthen Your Remnant. Deliver us from evil. Deliver us from the natural, the carnal, the fleshly, the earthly, the temporal, the seen-and-felt universe. Even as you have already given us the Kingdom of Your Dear Son, now establish us in His Kingdom. Establish us in the heavenly, the eternal, the invisible. Open our eyes to see that we are seated with You in the heavenly places, far above every assault of the enemy, overcoming as You overcame.

Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, Your throne endures forever, and Your scepter is a scepter of righteousness! I thank you for decreasing us and increasing Christ. Now, "thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57). Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chip-brogden/to-him-that-overcomes/>

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