

They Overcame by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of Their Testimony

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving one's testimony, having a deeper relationship with God, and sharing the gospel with others.

Duration: 1:17:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 15:7, John 16:24

Topics: "Overcoming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal testimony of how they were called by God to preach the gospel and take care of His sheep. They describe the moment when they felt the Lord's calling and their decision to leave home and dedicate their life to spreading the word of God. The speaker also reflects on their past struggles with suicidal thoughts and their realization that life doesn't end on earth, but that everyone will have to give an account of their life before God. They express gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Lord and share the message of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Today, I'd like to share with you my testimony when I was still a young child. We read in Revelation 12 verse 11 that they overcame Him by the word of their testimony, by the blood of the Lamb, and due to the fact that they did not love their life right unto death. Now, to give one's testimony isn't something small, it's something that Satan hates.

Some people don't know why they cannot overcome Satan. And they don't know that they can overcome Him by the word of their testimony, and perhaps they've never even given their testimony. And secondly, they didn't love their lives right unto death, and maybe some people are afraid that they might be killed.

I remember when I was still very young, when the Lord worked in my life. We grew up, we were five boys and one sister, and we would be in the car together. And we would always run as boys to see whether we could get in the car first, jump in, because we always wanted to sit next to the window.

So I would run, get into the car, and sit right next to the window at the door. And then somebody else would come in and say, OK, move up now. I'd say, well, I won't, because I got here first.

Now, because they were bigger than me and older than me, they would just push me, and I would get so upset. I'd get very upset. That was one of my sins.

And then my parents would ask me to do something, and I would get upset about that as well, and say, why am I always being sent? Why don't you send so-and-so? And we would fight and argue amongst one another. We would back chat to our parents. Those were my sins.

The sin of girls, and the sin of drinking, and those things, I didn't know anything about it. It didn't trouble me, but these were the sins that troubled me. And I would cry to the Lord.

And I would cry to the Lord, because after the service had come out, whilst we were still driving on our way back home, I would have already sinned against the Lord. And because I would have argued with my brothers, and I felt in my heart that that was displeasing to God. And I realized, with sin in my life, I wouldn't go to heaven.

Our home was quite close to the church, about one and a half miles away. And so whenever there would be a funeral, the coffin would be first brought to our home. And so whenever there would be a funeral, the coffin would be first brought to our home.

What would it be like when that day would arrive in my life? Because I knew that things didn't end there, but that they continued. We are still going to stand before God. Whether we go up to the stars, He is there.

In our area, there were big forests of gum trees. And I would look at those big gum trees and say, well, they are so lucky, because when they are cut off, it's the end of everything. But I won't be like those trees.

When I reach the end of my life here on earth, I'll have to appear before God, where I have to give an account of my life. Sometimes I even had suicidal thoughts, where I thought, well, let me just commit suicide and make an end of everything and to everything. But then the other voice would come to me, or the thought, well, that's not the end.

After that, you'll have to stand before God, where you give an account of your life. At school, when we started playing sports, I really started loving sports and almost worshipping it. And tennis was my favorite sport.

And when we'd go to school in the mornings, we'd wake up early so that we could be at school early and have a session to play tennis before we started our classes. And when we would go and compete against other schools, we would really wipe them out. And that was something important in my heart.

I really worshipped sport. And on Saturdays, if it would rain and we couldn't play any tennis, I'd feel sick. Now, I cannot relate everything to you, it would take too long, but as time went on, I would be troubled in my heart.

And at night when I would go to bed, I would be troubled. I'd say, oh God, there's something that I'm lacking in my life, something which I should have and must have, that I don't have. But when I would go to bed, I would be troubled.

I'd say, oh God, there's something that I'm lacking in my life, something which I should have and must have, that I don't have. And these prayers of mine were so superficial, so light, in that they didn't get anywhere. And I thought, well, maybe it's just because I'm still a child.

Maybe one day when I've grown up and I'm an adult, my prayers will reach God. And then at that time, we got a new minister. This minister didn't have a relationship with Jesus, he only had head knowledge of him.

And God was gracious to him, and he got converted. He could really preach. We didn't fall asleep in the service.

But all his knowledge of the Bible was just head knowledge. There was nothing in his heart. So he decided, let me go out in this world and go and seek for that which I need.

So he went out in the world, and he went and sought for that which he needed. And he really preached with all his strength, all his might. And many times as well, he would have many sermons in the week.

But it didn't get him anywhere. Eventually he even became sick, physically. And when he went to the doctor, who was a Jew, a Jewish doctor, the doctor said, look, there's nothing wrong with you, except that you don't have peace with God.

He said, aren't you a Christian? Why is it that you Christians are so afraid of death? He said, I know you Christians, you are so afraid of death. Why is it that you're afraid of death? Don't you believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah? And that really pulled the carpet from under his feet. And he went back home, and he spoke to his wife, and he said, my wife, there's something that I lack.

There's something which I need, which I haven't yet found. He said, there is an emptiness in his heart. I'm not satisfied.

There's something which I desperately need, which I haven't found. He said, I'm going to go on a journey now. And even if I've got to go right around the earth and the world, somewhere I'll find somebody who will be able to help me to get and to find that which I need.

And he left, and he got to Pretoria. And there he met with a child of God. When he got there, he decided, let me go to this man and speak to him.

When he got to him, he didn't expose his spiritual nakedness right there. Because after all, he was a minister of the gospel. So he didn't want to just expose and say that as a minister, that there was something that he lacked.

And when he spoke to him, they first spoke about other things, theological things, and also about Greek, the Greek language. And he noticed that the knowledge of this person concerning the Greek language wasn't as good as his own. Because he was a highly intelligent man.

And he thought, but how can this man help me if he doesn't even know Greek as well as I do? And also, as they spoke about the Greek language, he also discovered this man didn't, I mean, the Hebrew language, this man didn't know Hebrew as well as he did. So he decided that he should be off and go somewhere else. Perhaps there he'd find somebody who could help him.

In the meantime, that person was really a child of the Lord. And he realized that he wasn't getting anywhere with that man. So he said, before we part, let's pray together.

Let's go onto our knees. And so both of them went onto their knees and they prayed. And so this man prayed.

He said, oh Lord, here is this person. You know his need. Won't you please help him? And as they were there on their knees, all of a sudden it dawned on him that all his Christianity was in his heart, in his head, not in his heart.

And then he prayed and he said, oh Lord, won't you have mercy on me and enter into my heart, into me. Remember that word from Revelations chapter 3 verse 20 where the Lord says, Behold, I stand at the door and I knock. If any man opens, then I'll come in and sup with him and he with me.

And that word came to him. And another word came to him as well that said, whoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out. And he said, Lord, I come to you now.

And as he did that, he experienced something happening within him and realized that something was busy changing. When they got up from their knees, he said, I can now go. He said, thank you.

I'm satisfied. That which I've been seeking, I have now found. He said goodbye and went back home.

The doctors advised him that he should have full rest, total rest, and that he shouldn't preach whether it be for three weeks up to three months and not preach at all. But when he got back home, he found a new fire, a flame in his heart. And when it came to the Sunday, he decided, no, I'm going to the church.

I'm going to preach. And so he got up onto the pulpit and he preached. And as he spoke, we could all notice that there was something new in his life, something fresh, something which he didn't have before, which he had as he spoke.

I still remember the text on which he preached. From Matthew chapter one. It's read from verse 18.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to call him to give him the name Jesus, because you will save his people from their sins.

And then he spoke on this last verse, that you are to give him the name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. And as he expounded that point, I felt that need in my own heart, where I said, oh Lord Jesus, I need this, I need this that you should save me from my sins. Now always when we would pray in our church, we would stand on our feet.

And as I stood on to my feet, I prayed in my own heart and I said, Lord Jesus, I need you to save and to rescue me from my sin, to deliver me from my sin. And it was so wonderful when we sat down again, I just felt I had a wonderful feeling within me. And things changed in my life.

I always wanted to go and play sport at first. But I experienced that that love for sport came to an end. There was nothing that drew me to the sport field any longer on a Saturday.

Always on a Sunday, we were forced to go to church. But the following Sunday, nobody had to tell me you've got to go to church. I had that longing and that desire in my own heart to go there.

And even some Sundays when I was asked to stay at home, I would even be sad that I had to stay at home. And it became obvious and it was fulfilled that word, if anybody is in Christ Jesus, He is a new creation. Sports came to an end in my life.

The love for that was wiped out. And then I wanted to read the Bible. I got a very small Bible.

Approximately this size which could fit into my top pocket. And any free moment that I had, I would take out my New Testament and read from it. During the week, any free moment that I had, I would go off on my own where I could be alone.

There I would open my New Testament and read from it. And the love that I had for or the closeness that I had to many of my friends, that also came to an end. And I felt that that love for the Lord Jesus superseded the love that I had for my friends.

And even if sometimes they would ask me to go with them, that they would go and have some fun somewhere, I'd say, thank you, I'm busy, I cannot come now. I'd rather go and read my Bible. And sometimes when we would be together, they would then take out their cigarettes and say, well, why don't you have a smoke as well? And I'd say, no, thank you, I don't want that.

When I'd go with the boys and I would hear them speaking about girls. And if the boys would come back during a holiday time from the boarding school and would relate what other boys had said to them, they would say, I don't want that, I don't want that. And if the boys had told them how it was like to be with the girls and exactly in detail relate all of that, all of those disgraceful things, I'd say, well, that's not for me.

And I thought, my, are girls so important to them where they just would speak about girls? And if my friends would say, let's go for a drive, I'd say, no, thank you. And they'd say, why not? And I'd say, well, that's my endaba. But I knew that I would go off and read the Bible, also take a hymn book and sing and also at home.

If my family would go to visit, I would say, well, I'll stay at home and look after the house. I knew that I would stay there and sing and read the Bible. There were chapters in the Bible that were sweeter than honey to me.

And I would memorize some of those verses that even if I didn't have the Bible with me, that I could say it off by heart. One of those chapters were John 15. There are so many verses there that are so precious to me.

As is verse seven, if you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it'll be given to you. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it'll be given to you. And this was so sweet and so precious to me.

I said, you cannot compare this to anything else in the world. I said, even if these were the only words in the Bible, that if his words remain in us and we remain in him, we can ask for whatever we wish and he will give it to us. The Bible would be more precious than anything else.

And there are other verses like John 14 verse 12. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I'm going to the father.

And I'd say, Lord, what do you say here? Can this be true? I'll go and read from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and read about all that which the Lord Jesus had done. And I say, Lord, you say, if anyone believes in you, then you will do the same things and even greater things than that. And I'd say, there's nothing greater than this.

And I'd read about what Jesus did, how he cured the sick, how he raised those that were sick and cured those that were leprous. And where the Lord says, he who believes in me will do the same works as those. And I say, Lord, what do you say here? Can this be true? I'll go and read from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and read about all that which the Lord Jesus had done.

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And I say, Lord, what do you say here? Can this be true? I'll go and read from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and read about all that which the Lord Jesus had done. You see, this is what was precious to me. This is what filled my heart.

I didn't have time for the world and time for the things of girls. What is all of that? This is what was so precious to me. As I already have related to you that when Jesus came into my life, all that love that I had for sport came to an end.

Then another love came into my heart, a love for people. And I've had that longing and that desire, oh, may the blacks also meet up with that which I've experienced. And I'll take my New Testament and I'll go into the homes, into the huts of the people and there I'll read God's word to them.

And I'll go into the homes, into the huts of the people and there I'll read God's word to them. And you know what some of those huts were like? People would make fire in the huts and there's no chimney where the smoke can go out. So you'd sit in the smoke and my eyes would get red and sore from all the smoke.

Eventually I found out, I discovered that if one sat close to the fire, then the smoke wouldn't be so bad. So that's where I would sit and read from the Bible and tell the people about the Lord Jesus. When I would speak to the women about the Lord, they say, well, you know, we love Christianity, but we cannot become Christians due to our men.

Our men trouble us so much, our husbands. And what did I know? I was just a child. So what could I say to that? They still fought during those days.

Violent fights. Violent fights where they would fight with each other and one would go after the other one, pursue the other one, get a hold of him, stab him with his spear. And if his enemy would be down, you'd slit him open, cut off a piece of his liver and eat that.

That would show that he's a real hero and that he's got courage. Well, in those days, at least they didn't have AIDS. Today, if they would do that, everybody would die of AIDS.

And I say, well, why do you eat of the liver of that man? And they say, no, that's how we get courage. Through that, we become real men. The word in Zulu for courage is the same word as the word liver.

And if they pursue the enemy and then a girl from the one who's being pursued comes and runs towards that man and if he falls down, falls on top of him and covers him with her body, then his enemy would leave him alone. And I say, well, why don't you kill him then? And they say, well, I can't. She's rescued him.

And she would cover him totally with her body, lie on top of him, her head on top of his head, arms covering his arms, legs, everything. And then he would get there and he'd just shake his head and turn around with his spear and go away. He couldn't kill him.

You see, they had their unwritten code of respect. They didn't just do it like they do nowadays in the time of communism where they don't care who they kill, whether it's a woman, child, whoever. No, they had their unwritten code of how to do things.

When we were still children, we didn't have or know that which they have today. And the police would come and arrest some of the men and fill up their police vans with the men. Maybe 20 or 30 men would be taken off to jail.

And there was one of the men there. He was very light in complexion and a real fighter. And he had lost a lot of his fingers already, a couple of his fingers because of these fights.

So when he stood in front of the magistrate, the magistrate said, so do you plead guilty that you've also killed and murdered? He said, no, I haven't killed anybody. He was a very powerful fighter. And he said, bring the sticks.

So they put all the sticks and the nopkiris there in the front. And he had killed many people. So the magistrate said, now you pick up a stick there.

So he went there and he tried to pick it up and he failed. As he tried to pick it up, it fell down. He said, you see, I can't even pick up a stick.

And so the magistrate said, all right, discharged. He said, all right, discharged. In the meantime, he was a murderer and had killed many.

And he said, well, look, I can't even pick up a stick with this hand and I can't fight with this hand. And so all the men were then taken off to jail and the women stayed behind alone. I said, well, now this is my opportunity to go and preach the gospel to them.

There are no men that are going to hinder them from accepting the gospel and becoming Christians because the men are in jail. So I go and visit them. I say, why don't you come to church? I say to them, I want to ask them a question.

And they said, well, I don't have a question. I asked them, what was the question? They said, well, I'm asking you first. He said, no, no.

I said, I don't have a question. I said, no, no. I just wanted to ask.

He said, no, no, no. and they would have many excuses why they couldn't come to the service and I'd go to the next home and say well why don't you come to the service and the same thing all their excuses and so it dawned on me and I've I learned the lesson at that time that if women say that they're hindered by their husbands to come to the to the gospel and to Christ those are green lies I'm on Kajal our mind or tight in course cars in course cars are teenage daughter in Ghana's the tabasali I'm on Galao umundo my food call you a call no my banging of whom me no my boom a guru to the call away not lapokonutan to mentally corner it's just lies if somebody makes excuses and says it's because of this person, the wives blame their husbands, the husbands, their wives, the children, their parents, all of those are lies. If a person wants to become a Christian, wants to serve the Lord, he will do so.

Where there is a will, there is a way. Well, I've spoken for so long, I should perhaps come to an end. Let me close.

One day, because I felt in my heart the Lord calling me to say, follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men. I went into my bedroom, I knelt next to my bed and opened my Bible. When I read my Bible, where Jesus revealed himself to his disciples.

Remember that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter said, I'm going fishing. And early in the morning, as they were about to give up their fishing and get out of the sea and out of their boat. And Jesus called to them from the shore and said, haven't you any fish? And they said, no, we haven't caught anything.

And he said, throw your net on the right side of the boat. And when they did, their net was filled with fish. And John said to Peter, it is the Lord.

They didn't know who it was, was calling there from the shore. Immediately, Peter wrapped his outer garment around him, jumped into the water and went to the shore. The others were busy pulling in the net.

They couldn't really haul it out of the water. And when they had landed, Jesus said, bring some of the fish that you have here. Immediately, Simon Peter jumped aboard, dragged the net ashore, got some of the fish and brought it to Jesus.

When they got to Jesus, Jesus already had a fire going and some fish on the fire, busy cooking or frying. And so they were there with Jesus and no one of them dared to ask whether it is the Lord. So they ate until they were satisfied.

That net was full of fish, which they had pulled ashore, 153 large fish. And because of the many fish, the net should have torn. But it didn't.

After they had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter and said, Simon Peter, do you love me? Simon, son of John, do you love me? And the Greek word which he used for love is the word agape, which refers to the love of God, sacrificial love. In Greek, there are three words for love that are used to translate the word love in English. It's agape, which means God's love.

There's phileia, which is just a love to a friend. And then there's eros, which is an erotic love, just the love of this world, a carnal love. And Jesus asked of Peter, do you agape me? And Peter answered, I phileia you, I love you as a friend.

And Jesus said, feed my lambs. A second time, Jesus asked of Peter, Simon, son of John, do you agape me? That is a great love, the love of God. For God so loved the world that he agaped the world.

Not just the love that a parent has for a child, that's just phileia, that's not God's love, that's not agape love. And Peter said, Lord, you know everything, you know that I phileia you. He remembered how he had denied his master and his Lord, and that he would have never done that if he had this godly love for the Lord.

He just had a human love. That is why he was able to deny the Lord. And the third time, Jesus then asked of Peter, Peter, do you phileia me? And Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you just love me with phileia love? And Jesus said, Lord, you know everything, you know that I phileia you.

And as I knelt there at my bed and read these words, it was as if Jesus himself stood there before me, asking me these questions. And my heart was also hurt. I also felt hurt within.

But then Jesus said, even though you just love me as a friend, go and feed my sheep. I got up from my knees, went out of my bedroom to the kitchen, and I saw Jesus standing there. And I said, Lord, you know everything, you know that I phileia you.

And I went to the kitchen where I found my mom busy with the pots. And I said, Mom, I need to tell you something. She said, speak.

I said, Mom, I'm going to preach the gospel. The Lord has called me to go and to take care of his sheep. I went and I looked for my father, and I found him someplace on the yard.

And I said to him, Father, the Lord has called me to go and take care of his sheep. And so I'll be leaving home. I'm sorry that I won't be here at the farm.

I didn't know what to expect from my father, how he was going to treat me. I didn't know what he was going to do to me. I didn't know what he was going to do to me.

I didn't know what he was going to do to me. I didn't know what to expect from my father, how he was going to respond to that. But then he answered me in an amazing way.

He said, my son, feel free to obey the Lord and to follow him. He said, I'll be so glad if one of my children follows the Lord, then I'll always have someone who will remember me in prayer. That's where the matter was settled.

And after that, I never had any doubt about that whatsoever. Never any thoughts of turning around. Until today, I'm still busy shepherding the sheep of the Lord.

And so I'm leaving home. I'm going to take care of my sheep. I'm going to take care of my children.

I'm going to take care of my wife. I'm going to take care of my children. I'm going to take care of my wife.

I'm going to take care of my children. I'll have to end there. It's still a long story and I can still carry on for a long time.

But just to say that I then asked of the Lord three things. Firstly, I said, Lord, if you would just give me a bicycle that I can go around and get to people to bring them the word. And after some time, I said, Lord, if I

can have an old pickup van and a tent so I can pitch up a tent and preach the gospel, that's all that I need.

And so in that way, I said goodbye to my people at home. And I went out to preach the gospel. And until today, that is what I'm doing.

And I'm so thankful to the Lord that I was obedient to him in that. And I don't regret it for one moment. Now, it would be good if we had time, if we could go through the rows and give each one an opportunity to come and share what they have done for the Lord and how the Lord has worked in their life and called them and even go back to the age of 17 and say how the Lord has worked in your life.

We read in Revelation 12 verse 11, they overcame him by the blood of the lamb. And by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Let's bow our heads and pray.

We thank you so much, Lord, that you are prepared to come to this world, to come and identify yourself with us, we people. That you have come, Lord, to save us, to rescue us from our sin and to give us such wonderful promises. Amen.

What we see in Europe. What we see in Russia. Romania.

What we see in America. What we see in South Africa. What I see in you who are present here today was or is the fruit of the obedience of my brother when he said goodbye to his home.

And I can't thank God enough for my brother being obedient to his calling. Where would I have been if my brother wouldn't have obeyed the calling of the Lord Jesus? We don't worship men. We don't uplift men.

But we can't get away from the fact that the person who is obedient to the Lord, that we love him, that we respect him, and that we wish God's blessing upon him, and that we pray and say, God, keep thy child for our sakes. We need him. Because we know out of our own lives what that man has meant to us.

And I can only say, O Lord, may God bless you, that you were faithful to the Lord's calling. And you've been an example in shepherding God's flock. I've just returned from Europe.

And when you meet thousands of people who thank God for a man who was obedient to his calling, and it inspires me to be faithful, and when the Lord asks us, with what love do you love me? Is it Agape, is it Fileo, or is it Horus? When I was in Europe, a man went into a school. And he started shooting. And when he pointed the gun on one child, the teacher jumped in front of the child, and the bullet struck the teacher.

And I said, Lord, if a human being can do that, have I got that love to give my life for others? And when my brother spoke here, I said, I see God's love in that man. Thank you for allowing me to say that. And we give all honor and glory to the one who gave his life, the Lord Jesus Christ, for you and for me.

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