

# The Overcoming Life

by Gareth Evans

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*Gareth Evans challenges Christians to move beyond a wilderness existence into an overcoming life through abiding in Christ and recognizing spiritual battles.*

**Duration:** 32:35

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:12

**Topics:** "Overcoming"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the power of the roaring lion, which represents Satan. However, he emphasizes that Jesus disarmed the lion and holds him on a strong chain. The preacher challenges the congregation to strive for a higher level of Christianity, one that goes beyond the normal experience in North America. He explains that there are three stages of spiritual growth: little children, fathers, and strong young men, which are not based on gender or age. The preacher encourages believers to rise above negative thoughts and believe in the truth of God's Word.

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## Transcript

But hopefully I can get caught up with those through our website. So just bring forth the word of God to us today. Let's give him a round of applause as appreciation, please.

On Wednesday, Anne and myself, we shall be going to Norway. It is the land of her father. And for our 50th wedding anniversary, we are going there for three months so that she can... I can speak Norwegian.

I can speak a little. I do not speak Norwegian, but I understand a little, and she is going to speak Norwegian. John, I think it's important to say that the young man who committed this atrocity in Norway was not a member of a terrorist group.

He was a conservative Christian on his own webpage, on his own, what do you call it, page. It is so possible to be called a Christian without ever displaying the fruits of the Spirit. A. W. Torsen made this statement at the end of a remarkable ministry.

He said, I believe that more than half of the people in my congregation were not even born again. Could that possibly be said of this church? Only God knows the answer to that. And maybe you.

I am not an evangelist. I love seeing people come to Christ. I love seeing people being born again and displaying the fruit of the Spirit as they grow and are conforming to the image of Christ.

I am more of a disciple and a teacher. I love to see people coming free from Egypt and coming into the purposes of God. It was not God's will to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt so that they could spend 40 years in the wilderness.

It is not Christ's purpose that he brings you out of the kingdom of darkness to spend 40 years in the wilderness that you call a Christian life. And I am utterly convinced, utterly convinced that most of the people I've ever had in my churches are still living wilderness lives. Or they're out of Egypt.

And when I travel and compare what I see in Latin America or in Asia with what is happening in North America and Europe, I'm convinced that the great majority of people in our North American and European churches are wilderness Christians. And they're satisfied with being wilderness Christians. They're satisfied with the manner that God sends from heaven.

They're satisfied with the few oases they meet maybe every Sunday in their church. But they've never experienced what it is to enter into the promises of God and to come into the rest of God. That is why when Pastor John asked me if I would come, I said of course I'd be delighted and thrilled to come.

I love being with you people. He asked me what was on my heart, and I said, Abide in Christ. And I want to challenge you, as I did on my first Sunday with you, to strive to enter into the rest of God.

Where you cease from your own labors, you begin to rest in what God does. A place where you'll see the walls of Jericho fall because God does it, not because you did it. I love the character Caleb.

In fact, he's my favorite Bible character, who at the age of 80 came to Joshua and said, Remember what Moses promised me back there when you and I were the two spies that came back from Canaan with a good report? Remember what Moses promised me? He promised me Mount Hebron, and I want that mountain because that's the mountain where giants dwell. I like that spirit. A man who has tasted the manna, who has tasted the quails, who has had sand in his mouth, sandwiches.

Maybe that's where we get the word sandwiches from. And sand in his feet, and he is not satisfied because he's seen the promised land. Brothers and sisters, I've seen the promised land, and I'm not satisfied with this wilderness existence that most Christians call Christianity.

Watchman Nee wrote a book about the normal Christian life, and in it he said that the normal Christian life makes our Christian life in North America subnormal. The normal Christian life is so far higher than what most Christians in North America experience. My first Sunday, I challenge you to strive to enter into the rest of God because that is one of the characteristics of a man, a woman, who knows what it is to enter into the abundant life, and to enter into the abiding life.

You see, when a man is born again, when a woman is born again, she is in Christ Jesus. There is no question about that. The Bible says that he is in us, and we are in him.

Praise God, it is thrilling to know that I'm in Christ Jesus. Amen? But am I abiding in Christ Jesus? That's a very different thing. You see, I can be in Christ Jesus, but not abiding in Christ Jesus.

The tribe of Manasseh, the tribe of Ephraim, and half the tribe of Dan came into the promised land. But when they fought the battles with their brothers, they decided they wanted to go back outside because their land was outside a land fit for cattle. That is what many Christians want to do.

They're not prepared to abide in the promised land. The characteristics of the man or woman who is abiding in the promised land are many, but I've only had the opportunity to share a few with you. One of them, of course, is what Jesus said, you will bring forth fruit.

If you abide in me, you will bring forth fruit. This young man in Norway most certainly is not bringing forth fruit. Not the fruit of the Spirit.

And it is my view, when I look at most of the church, that very few Christians today are bringing forth the ripe fruit of the Spirit. Maybe they've experienced a little bit of joy, a little bit of happiness, a little bit of peace. But I do not see any of the fruit of meekness, pliability, moldability in the hand of God.

Even Paul himself said these words, remember? I try to do good, but I find I can't. And when I do not want to do evil, I find I do. O wretched man that I am! What he is saying is that that fruit of the Spirit of long-suffering is yet to be formed in me.

That's a fruit of the Spirit too. Another characteristic is that of abiding in Christ is that we will be resting in Him. Not striving all the time to try to please Him, but resting in Him.

Last week, I talked to you about another evidence of the Spirit for life. Can you tell me what it is? The walk of faith. I am crucified with Christ, said Paul, nevertheless I live.

Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who gave Himself for me. Brothers, believe me, that is the correct translation.

The King James Verse has it right. This is one where the others do not have it right. Because we've always been taught that we live by faith in, believing in, trusting in.

It is not that faith which pleases God, it's when He puts His finger into the heart of a man or woman, causing that man or woman to move according to His will, and that man or woman is obedient because he has learned the fruit, or developed the fruit of meekness, like that bit in the horse's mouth, where the horse can be moved at just the slightest touch. I want to be such a man, when God speaks a still, small voice into my spirit, my spirit responds. That's the walk of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

And the man or woman who is abiding in Christ is so close he hears that voice. He feels the touch, and he obeys. I want to take you into my third characteristic of a man or woman who is abiding in Christ.

If you turn with me, please, to the first letter of John, chapter 2, I'd like to read to you a few verses. I'm writing to you, verse 12, sorry, chapter 2, I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

I'm writing to you, young men, because you've overcome the evil one. Then John appears to repeat himself. I've written to you, children, because you know the Father.

I've written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I've written to you, young men, because you're strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you've overcome the evil one. I want to talk about the overcoming life this morning.

You see, if a man or woman is abiding in Christ, he or she will be an overcomer. John, in his letter, gives us three, a simple measuring rod of Christian maturity. He just gives us three stages in this.

There are those he calls little children. There are those he calls fathers. And there are those he calls strong young men.

Now, let me be clear about this. This is not a gender situation. Nor is it a chronological age situation.

He is not talking about little children who come to Sunday school. There are many in this congregation this morning who are probably little children. A little child, says John, this is how he describes it.

I write to you, little children, because your sins have forgiven you. And then, secondly, because you know the Father. When I was 17, I knelt by my bed in my home in Wales, and I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

I was not going to church at the time. I came from a non-Christian family. But I'd been challenged with the question, what will you do with Jesus Christ? And after five weeks of pondering this question, I knelt by my bed one Sunday night, and I said, Jesus, if you're real, if you can hear me right now, please come into my heart.

Come into my life. Take away my sin. Amen.

I didn't know what else to say. But I got up from my knees. I didn't have a flash of light, nothing like that.

But I got up from my knees knowing two things. My sins were forgiven, and I could call him Father. That is the first character of a child of God.

And I trust that every one of you in this church knows that you can say, I know my sins are forgiven, and I can call him Father. That makes you, says John, a little child. I don't care how old you are.

I was sitting in a church in, where was I? Haiti. And I was in, that's right, in Haiti, and I was at this, not this time, six years ago. I was at this little party after the service, and there was an old, old man sitting by me.

I said, hi brother, how are you? He said, fine. I said, how long have you been a Christian? One week. And he must have been 75 years of age.

One week. He's a little child. But then John goes on and speaks about the end of the journey.

He doesn't talk about the middle yet. He talks about little children, the beginning of the journey, where I started at 17. But you see, when God calls us little children, He doesn't want us to stay little children.

I know too many childish Christians, who claim to have been Christians for many years, but they're still little children. And all their faith has ever stretched to is, oh, I know God has forgiven me, and I know I can call Him Father. That's all they know.

But you see, maturity, says John, is knowing Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I want God to reveal Himself to me day by day.

When I stop seeking after the revelation of God, I might as well die. But I'm seeking for I want to know Him more. I know Him a lot more now than I did when I was 17, but oh, I yearn to know Him more.

That's why David could cry out, Oh, as the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after thee. That's why Moses could say, having met with God on the mountaintop, Oh God, I've seen you on the mountaintop, I've seen you in the bush, but oh God, show me your glory. I'm hungry for more.

That is the call of the man, the woman, who is going to know God more. And John says the goal of our Christian walk is that we might know Him who is from the beginning, the Alpha, the Omega, God in all the full revelation of Himself. Amen? But you see, you cannot grow from being a little child to being a spiritual father without the intermediate stages.

And this is how John describes intermediate stages. I write to you, young men, because you're strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you've overcome the evil one. There is no Christian maturity without overcoming.

Do you know there's a battle going on today, a spiritual battle? We call it spiritual warfare, we read books about it, we see films about it. Are you aware that you are in a spiritual battle today? One brother is. Thank you, brother, the two of us will be.

On one side is Satan and the forces of darkness. Who's on the other side? Jesus is not on the other side. Jesus fought the battle 2,000 years ago, and He won.

He defeated the enemy. He nailed Him on the cross and displayed Him openly. He is not on the other side fighting against Satan.

It is you. Now, does that frighten you? Well, it shouldn't, because greater is He who is in you. It's about time we got our theology correct, brothers and sisters.

There is a spiritual war going on, and you are in the midst of it, whether you like it or not. You can stay a little child if you want to. But if you want to come into the abiding place in Christ, you're going to have to win in the battle.

By the Spirit of God that dwells in you. Let me tell you a little bit about the enemy. One of the greatest enemies you have in a spiritual battle is called self.

Self. I have a poem here that I pulled out some years ago, written by A.B. Simpson. There is a foe whose hidden power the Christian well may fear.

More subtle far than inbred sin, and to the soul more dear. It is the power of selfishness. It is the willful I. And ere my Lord can live in me, my very self must die.

There is like Anak, sons of old, a race of giants still, self-glorian, self-confidence, self-seeking, and self-will. Still must these haughty Anakim by Caleb's sword be slain, ere Hebron's heights of heavenly love our conquering feet shall gain. O save me from self-will, dear Lord, which claims thy sacred throne.

O let my will be lost in thine, and let thy will be done. O keep me from self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Let me exchange my strength for thine, and lean alone on thee.

O save me from self-seeking, Lord, let me not be my own. A living sacrifice I come, Lord, keep me thine alone. From proud vain glory save me, Lord, from pride of praise and fame, to Christ be all the honor given, the glory to His name.

O Jesus, slay the self in me by thy consuming breath. Show me thy heart, thy wounds, thy shame, and love my soul to death. When the Shekinah flame came down, even Moses could not stay.

So let thy glory fill me now, and self forever slay. O Jesus, Jesus, come and dwell in me. Walk in my steps each day.

Live in my life, love in my love, and speak in all I say. Think in my thoughts, let all my acts thy very actions be. So shall it be no longer I, but Christ that lives in me.

What about the other enemy, Satan, and all his forces? It's a frightening thing to many Christians to realize that Satan, though still only a created being, has a legion of demons with which he wishes to attack the church. But Paul says this, I am not afraid of him, because I am not unaware of his tactics. I know exactly how Satan works.

That is why I said, Paul, whenever it is necessary for me to forgive someone, I do it speedily, because if I do not forgive, I know I'm giving foothold to Satan. I'm not unaware of his tactics, I know how he works. The tragedy is 99% of Christians do not know how Satan works.

And we are very unaware of his tactics. Did you know, for example, I'm going to give you a few of his tactics this morning. Did you know, for example, that he has, that says, Peter, he goes around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Your enemy, says Peter, is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may... You know that verse? Do you know that verse? One of his tactics is to be like a roaring lion. Have you ever wondered about it? I've never been close to a roaring lion. Or I've been to the zoo, and I've seen lions behind the bars, sleeping peacefully, and I've seen them on television, but I've never been near a roaring lion.

But I have been near lots and lots of cats, and the lion is the cat. And I've noticed something about cats, that when they are stalking their prey, they go down very, very low on the ground, and they creep along to that little bird. Have you ever seen them do this? And the nearer they get, they're quiet.

And when they get very, very close, they go, meow! Do they? A roaring lion will never catch its prey. So why does he roar? If this morning you heard a roaring lion out in the fire, then what would you do? Pass a jar and we'd lead the way. You see, a roaring lion has that effect upon us.

It affects our emotions. It produces fear. It produces embarrassment.

Anger. All the emotions that rise up in man. I want you to stop a moment and look at the lion as he comes through the door.

You'll notice, first of all, he hasn't got any teeth. And there are no claws on his hands, on his paws. Because your Savior disarmed him on the cross 2,000 years ago.

You'll also notice there's a strong chain around his neck. And the one who holds the chain is very strong, even though he's got marks of nails in his hands. And he will not allow that roaring lion to hurt you, unless, of course, you put yourself in the path of it.

Satan has no authority nor power over you except what you give him. And you and I need to learn that in this battle, when emotions arise of fear, of anger, of envy, of embarrassment, it is simply the roar of the lion. And I know that many of you, when Pastor John talked about the atrocity in Norway, immediately you thought about Islam.

And you're afraid of Islam, aren't you? Well, that was silent. I remember as a young teacher in Wales when Khrushchev said to President Kennedy, we will overrun you. I went to school the next day and I heard a girl crying in the cloakroom.

It was the head girl of our school. I went in to see Carol and asked her what was wrong. And she was so frightened by communism.

What's happened to communism since? And exactly the same will happen to Islam. Why? Because your king is still on the throne. You need to stop being afraid of what the enemy wants you to be fearful of.

Because your king is still on the throne. And you need to lift up your eyes to see the king. That's one of his tactics.

Another one of his tactics, he's got a horde of trained monkeys. Oh, don't laugh, this is one that divides churches all the time. They're called offenses.

And you allow that offense to jump on your shoulder. I didn't like the way Pastor John talked too much this morning. I don't like the way this Christian preacher is preaching at us.

And you get offended. In my notes, I've got notes for you as I did every Sunday, I've got a list of five references that show you what happened when people got offended. Jesus could do no miracles in his hometown because they were offended at him.

The seed that fell upon stony ground brought forth no fruit because it's like the man who hears the word but then is offended by it. You see many scriptures, five of them, you look up what happens to offense. And brothers and sisters, when leadership, particularly Pastor John, allow offenses to sit on their shoulders, you watch the Spirit of God leave your church.

You need to get that monkey off your shoulder straight away and put it to death beneath your feet. Because it's an agent of Satan. Oh yes, but you don't know what she said.

You don't know what he did. I do not care what he said or did. If you've got offenses upon you, it is an agent from Satan.

When I came back from working on the Anastasis in Africa, I came back and I visited a man here in the city who was a member of my congregation in Victoria. And Gordon said to me, oh, I said, I'll be in church on Sunday. He said, wonderful, everybody would be so thrilled to see you.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it too. Then he said, but it's a good job you weren't there last Sunday. I said, why? He said, oh, he said, the young people led the worship.

It was awful. It was so loud and so fast and nobody knew the words. Everybody was offended.

I said, I wouldn't have been. Oh, yes, you would. I said, no, no, I wouldn't have been.

Oh, yes, you would. I said, no, I wouldn't. He said, some of the people even left and went out.

I said, oh, the weaker brethren. No, no, he said, some of the seniors. I said, exactly, the weaker brethren.

Those who couldn't handle change. I said, the weaker brethren, not in the Bible. Then I said, but I wouldn't have been offended.

He said, oh, yes, you would. No, I wouldn't, God. Yes, you would, he said.

I said, no, I wouldn't. Come on, he said, don't tell me you like that kind of music. I said, no, I don't like that kind of music.

I prefer quiet, meditative music. But I would not have been offended. Yes, you would.

No, I wouldn't. I said, Gordon, I would not have been offended because I choose not to be offended. I will not allow that monkey on my shoulder.

It's a tactic of Satan. And the church is blindly ignorant. Of the danger.

In Ephesians, we read another tactic of Satan is that he fires arrows. We're told to put on the whole armor of God. To take the shield of faith where we will quench the fiery arrows of the evil one.

What are these arrows? They're the lies that we so easily believe. You see, Satan is a created being. He's not omniscient.

He does not know all things. He's not omnipotent like your savior. He's not omnipresent.

He's a created being. And his only weaponry into your mind is if he can fire thoughts into your mind. Young woman, you want to be a missionary? Well, today, if you want to be a missionary today, you have to get two university degrees.

And you have to raise support of at least \$70,000 a year. And if you want to go to many countries in the world, of course, there's a lot of violence in many countries in the world. And you do not like violence.

And in most countries nowadays, you need to get inoculations. And the needles they use are about this long. And you can't possibly be a missionary.

That's a lie. Because the word of God tells me I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. So am I going to believe the lie or am I going to believe the truth? We are too ready to believe lies.

About ourselves. About God. About the church.

About Islam. And all the other things that create fear and doubt and impotence in the church of God. And we're totally blind to the fact that that thought that came into your mind is an arrow from the bow of Satan.

How do you stop it? Well, one way to stop it is to rise above it. I come from the land of Wales. And in my country, there are many, many ruined castles.

I used to play in a ruined castle when I was a boy. I went back there recently with my granddaughter. And with my mouth wide open, I began to look up to the top of the battlements where I used to climb.

I must have been nuts. If I fall, I mean, I wouldn't be as simple as that. But you see, those castles were built by landowners who were afraid of their neighbours.

That the neighbours would come marauding and stealing their sheep. And so they decided to build fortresses to protect themselves. And all those fortresses are built on high ground.

Because you see, if the army of the neighbour comes against you with their spears and their lances and their bows and arrows, they didn't have guns in those days, it is much harder to fight to the top of a castle than it is to fight from the top. And you can stand in the battlements and look over and see the enemy coming and say, Oh, missed. Missed.

And then at the opportune time, fire your arrows down. That is why they built castles. And I want to tell you that your saviour right now is in the castle.

And he says in the scriptures in Ephesians 2, that you have also been raised up to be seated in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah. I'm already in the castle.

So the enemy, where is the enemy? He is beneath his feet. For in Ephesians it tells me that God has exalted Jesus far above all principalities and powers and placed all things beneath his feet. So where is Satan, Pastor John? Underneath his feet.

And if we are in Christ, he is underneath our feet too. When are we going to start living the reality of what we say we believe? And refuse to believe the lies of the enemy. One could go on.

My time is passing. The notes I give to Pastor John will have all this and more. And if I have piqued your interest in the abiding life, I invite you to go on my webpage.

I have all my teachings on my webpage. And instead of me speaking for 35 minutes and missing out half of what I want to say, and not having time to say the other half of what I want to say, I invite you to do that. Let me paint this picture for you.

As a 16-year-old boy, I knelt by my bed in Wales, not knowing the Bible, didn't know any theology. I just was challenged to ask if Jesus was alive. My mother had died some years before and I thought, well, I can talk to mum, maybe I can talk to Jesus.

That was all my knowledge of Christianity was. Oh, I had Sunday school lessons, of course. I knelt by my bed and I prayed that simple prayer.

Little realising the exciting, thrilling, wonderful journey that I was about to embark on. You see, I came out of Egypt. I did not hear them, but the promise was made.

These taskmasters you see, that have held you in bondage so long, you'll see them again, no more, forever. The tragedy is that many of the children in the wilderness kept looking back. And the enemy that they left in Egypt still abided in their hearts.

But God did not bring them out to keep them in the wilderness, he brought them out to enter into the promised land. And only two of them by faith saw that and the rest chose not to. And for 40 years they walked the wilderness.

You can decide whether you want to walk the wilderness the rest of your life or whether you want to enter the promises of God. But I came out and I found that instead of the path being rosy and sweet, I found there were obstacles and difficulties and roaring lions and arrows in my mind. But I had a man, I had mentors, praise God, I had mentors in my life who taught me the Word of God.

And I began to apply the Word of God. In my marriage, I had difficulties in my marriage. I once said to my wife Anne, I'm going to Germany, you stay here or come with me, what are you going to do? We were that

near to separating.

Except for one thing, we had the Word of God and we did not want to separate. But that was the flimsiness of my knowledge. But as I overcame by the Word, I found that other enemies came and I overcame by the Word.

And I now realize that the journey was to end over here I've come to know Him as from the beginning. And the picture I now get is the Father looking at me and looking at you and saying, come on, come on, that's it, come on. Wanting us to be overcomers because as we overcome, then He reveals more of Himself to us.

I talk to people, they tell me, I tell stories, they say, oh, I love his stories. And I ask them what their experience of God is. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

And there's no evidence at all of them ever being an overcomer. Pastor John, how many hours do you spend counseling people who fail, marriage problems, difficulties, doubts, fears? And how many times do you need to take them into the Word of God to show them the answer to their fears? The man, the woman who's abiding in Christ is an overcomer. They've learned the tactics of Satan.

They've signed their own death warrant so that self will die. And they're coming into a place where God is more and more willing to reveal more and more of Himself to them. I've seen the burning bush, brothers and sisters.

I've been to the top of the mountain. I've tasted of the grapes of Eshcol. I've drunk the milk and honey that comes there.

And I tell you what it does, it produces a longing and a thirst for more of God. More of God. Oh God, come to Victoria by your Spirit.

Pour out your Spirit upon this land. Pour out your Spirit upon Sydney so the men and women will worship you as you do. May the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering.

Could I taste it, Lord? Oh Lord, God, come. And I pray, Pastor John, for your congregation that my teaching to you these three weeks will at least have stirred something in you that you say, I want God, no God like that. For the glory of His name.

Amen.

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