

The Call to Overcome

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the call for believers to overcome challenges by focusing on the vision of Christ and maintaining their first love for Him.

Duration: 1:09:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 1:9-20, Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:26, Revelation 3:5

Topics: "Overcoming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of having a vision and how it relates to the call of God. The vision is described as an unveiling of the mind of God to our spirit, and it is through seeing this vision that we receive the call. The main focus of the vision is on the son of man, who is described in great detail, while the seven golden candlesticks in the background are not described. This is because the purpose of the vision is for us to see Christ and his glory. The speaker emphasizes that as Christ is, so is the church. The vision also reveals that Christ holds the keys of death and Hades, signifying his power and authority.

Transcript

May we look to the Lord in prayer. O Lord, we are gathered together in Thy victorious name. O how we praise and thank Thee that we are today in the good of Thy victory.

It is upon this ground that we meet. We praise and thank Thee as the enemy has no place in Thee. He has no place in us.

O how we praise and thank Thee because of Thy victory. We claim Thy victory together for tonight that Thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, that the enemy shall be defeated, bound and cast out, that Thyself shall be exalted and be seen and heard and worshipped and loved. O Lord, we do commit this time completely into Thy hands.

In the name of our Lord Jesus, amen. Will you please turn to the book of Revelation, chapter one. We read from verse nine.

Revelation chapter one, verse nine. I, John, your brother, and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos. For the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a

trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches, and to Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamon, and unto Tytyra, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the candlesticks, one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girded about at the breast with a golden girdle, and his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead.

And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first, and the last, and the living one, and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Chapter 2, verse 7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

Verse 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Verse 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one kneweth, but he that receiveth it.

Verse 26. And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers. As I also have received of my Father, and I will give him the morning star.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. Verse 5. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments, and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Verse 12. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God and mine own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Verse 21. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Last evening we mentioned that there is only one who overcomes, and this is our Lord Jesus. He is the overcomer, and it is on the basis of this that we find the call to overcome. God can never call for overcomers if his Son has not overcome.

But after our Lord Jesus has overcome, then the call is out. The call is now upon every one of the children of God. The call to overcome.

According to the order of this book of Revelation, it seems as if we are going backward. But as our brothers say, actually by going backward we are going onward and forward. We considered together last night on the fifth chapter.

Because spiritually speaking, this is the foundation of chapters one through three. It is on the basis of Christ as the overcomer. It is on the basis of his ascension.

It is on the basis of the glory of the Redeemer that we find the first and last three chapters in the book of Revelation. So spiritually speaking, this will be the right order. In chapter one, of course we know, it is the vision.

The vision that Apostle John saw on the Isle of Patmos. It is a wonderful vision, a glorious vision. It is the vision of the Son of Man in the midst of seven golden candlesticks or lampstands.

That is the vision. Before, there is the call to overcome. There is the need of seeing the vision.

The vision actually constitutes the call. Where there is no vision, there is no call. It is only when a vision is seen, then the call is upon us.

Very often we feel that there is no call to us. Why is it that some people have heard the call while others do not? The reason is some have seen the vision while the others have not. So the most important thing is that we may see the vision.

Of course, by the vision, it does not mean that it is only something you see with your naked eyes. A vision is an unveiling of the mind of God. It is the vision.

A revealing of the mind of God to our spirit. That is a vision. Now here you will find a vision of the Son of Man in the midst of seven golden lampstands.

The Son of Man is in the foreground. The seven golden lampstands form the background. And by joining these together, you have the perfect vision.

We find in this vision, the Son of Man is described in detail. But there is no description of the seven golden because the mind of God is that we may see the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is what God wants us to see.

God wants us to see Christ in the foreground. To see Him. And of course we know by seeing Him, we see the seven golden.

In other words, the seven golden lampstands are the seven golden lampstands take their character from the Son of Man. What the Son of Man is, that will be what the seven golden lampstands are. That is the reason why only the Son of Man is described.

While the seven golden lampstands are not described at all. By seeing Christ, you see the church. But it is always Christ in the foreground.

The church is always in the background. This is the mind of God. The mind of God is that we may see Him.

But always with the candlesticks at the background. Not seeing Him without any background. Not seeing Him because we won't be able to see Him in His fullness if there is no background.

Just like in a painting, when an artist is going to paint a painting, well probably he is thinking of painting, say, some tree. But you don't just paint the tree. You'll find that he will paint a background.

And with that background, the foreground will stand out. It will be seen more vividly, more distinctively, and more clearly. Now that is the way of God.

He does want us to focus our attention upon His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. But in order that we may see Him standing out, He gives us a background. And this background you always find in the church.

But on the other hand, we must remember that the church never forms the foreground. And push Christ to the background. Now if you try to do that, then you'd see nothing.

So here you'll find the unity between Christ and His church. The church takes its character from Christ. The church uplifts Christ.

The church makes Christ more distinctive. The church is the background. And the Son of Man is the foreground.

Here you'll find He is described in many features. In the first place, He is called the Son of Man. We know that this is a title that our Lord Jesus used Himself while He was on earth.

The Son of Man. What is the meaning of it? Of course, it means a lot. But we will just say, by being the Son of Man, it means that He is the beginning of a new mankind.

Now that is what our brother is communicating to us in the morning session. That God is forming a new mankind. And this new mankind is formed according to Christ.

The Son of Man. The beginning of a new mankind. And it is full of life.

Full of life. He is clothed with a garment down to the foot. Full of righteousness.

He is full of righteousness down to the foot. Gird about at the breast with a golden girdle. Full of divine love.

And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow. Full of wisdom. And His eyes were as a flame of fire.

Full of spiritual discernment. Penetrating sight. And His feet like unto varnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace.

You know, a brass that is refined in a furnace shines. Full of light. And we walk in the light as He is in the light.

We have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all our iniquities. And His voice as the voice of many waters.

Full of strength. Powerful. And He had in His right hand seven stars.

Fully responsible. And out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. Full of divinity.

Dividing. Cutting asunder. Purifying.

And His countenance as the sun shines in His glory. In His strength. Full of glory.

Dear brothers and sisters, what we have here is a sight. The sun over His house. The great high priest in His true sanctuary.

In His kingdom. The king in His own kingdom. That's what we see.

We see a sight of Christ. How glorious, magnificent, majestic Christ is. And we know as He is, so is.

The seven golden lampstands take their character from the sun. And following this vision, you'll find in chapters two and three, the vocation. First, the vision.

The vision of Christ in the midst of His. And then you'll find, secondly, the vocation of the church. In these two chapters you'll find the seven churches in Asia.

Now these seven churches are not hypothetical cases. These seven churches are actual churches in the Roman province of Asia. At the time of John the Apostle.

These seven churches really existed at the end of the first century. Before the last of the twelve apostles passed away. There in Asia were these seven churches.

As represented by the seven golden lampstands. God chose these seven churches in Asia. At the end of the first century.

Why? We know that there were more than seven churches in the Roman province of Asia at that time. But the Holy Spirit just chose these seven. Why? Because these seven will give us a full picture of the church of God.

Then, at that time, and even up to now. The condition of the church of God is fully represented by the seven churches in Asia. So we are not looking at these seven churches just from the historical standpoint.

We are not just reading their conditions two thousand, almost two thousand years ago. Nor are we looking at these seven churches in a prophetic sense. As if they represent the whole church history.

But brothers and sisters, we would like to see these seven churches together. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said to the churches. Let him see the vision.

Vocation follows vision. Vocation should be the practical expression of the vision seen. Vocation makes the vision practically seen by all.

Vocation should correspond with vision. And probably that is the reason why in the letters to the seven churches, You'll find every letter begins with something of Christ, as we have already seen in the first chapter. Whenever a vocation and a vision are separated, whenever there is discrepancy between the vision and the vocation, you know there is failure.

If there is contradiction between the vision and the vocation, then the failure is great. At the time of the Apostle John, when our Lord Jesus looked upon His church at that time, He found that there was much

that did not correspond. The Lord had not removed any of these lampstands yet, nor had the Lord spooled them out of His mouth yet.

The Lord still recognized these churches as His. And they were still continuing, awkwardly at least, as usual. And in each one of them there were some virtues commendable.

And yet, when the Lord tried to measure Himself with the churches, He found there was much discrepancy, and sometimes grave contradictions. And it is for this reason that the Lord Jesus is walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. He is there to reprove.

He is there to restore. He is there to recover. And it is with this background that the call for overcomer.

Dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord Jesus should walk among His churches today, do you think we are in a better position, or in a worse position? Not to say that there was much lacking in the inward reality. Even in the awkward form, we wonder whether the Apostle John will recognize us. And if this is the case, then certainly the call to overcome is most urgent.

In these seven letters, we find in each letter the call to overcome. We are not able to go into details, but I think probably it will be of some help to us if we just pick out some of the important points. And then try to see what constitutes that call.

What is the call to overcome? Wherefore shall we overcome? In what place have we fallen? Who will be overcomers? In the first letter, the letter to the church in Ephesus. Now if we know anything of the history of that church, you know if you read the book of Acts, you will find the church in Ephesus had a very good beginning. The word of God prospered in that city.

Paul stayed in that city for years. And there the word of God prospered greatly. And many of them came and confessed their sins.

And they burned all their books of magic, which were a great deal. In other words, you will find there was first love in that church in Ephesus. They loved the Lord with a perfect heart.

That is the reason why we have Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We know that this letter to the Ephesians reveals to us the very height of spiritual knowledge and wisdom. The full knowledge.

Why is it that Paul was able to communicate the mystery of Christ, the mystery of God to that church, which he cannot do to the church at Corinth? To the church in Corinth, that church, which boasts itself of knowledge. They think that they have the knowledge. They are not behind anybody, to anybody in knowledge, but knowledge person.

And because they are full of this kind of knowledge, Paul was not able to communicate to them the full counsel of God. But you find to the Ephesians, Paul was free to communicate to them the mystery of Christ. Why? It is because these are a people.

If you read the letter to the Ephesians, you will find the word love is mentioned. If I count it right, 17 times. Love.

Love. It is because they love. They love God.

And that opens the avenue to real knowledge. If you want to gather information, if you want to gather mental knowledge, so to speak, love is not required. You may accumulate great knowledge without love.

But if you want to know God in the real way, love is the secret. It is not by pouring upon books. It is by loving.

And you know the letter to the Ephesians concludes with a most wonderful verse. I do not know if you have noticed that, the last verse of the sixth chapter, verse 24, of the letter to the Ephesians. Grace be unto all then that love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul concludes his letter by saying, if anyone does not love Maranatha, but here you will find, may the grace be with all then that love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible. This church, this people, they love God with an incorruptible love. Not with the love that is corruptible.

And we know what that love is. Human love. But with a love incorruptible, divine love.

They are so filled with Christ, constrained by the love of Christ, that they love God with an incorruptible love. That's the church in Ephesus. But when the Apostle John was used of God to write the letter, the second letter to the Ephesians, we find many outward manifestations, which were actually the result of their inward love towards God.

These outward manifestations in the beginning were the consequence of their inward love of God. But you'll find, after some years, these outward manifestations continue. They look very well, very commendable, and they continue on.

And yet, the inward flame, you'll find the Lord Jesus says, I am against you. In spite of all the good things you have, all these outward things you have, I am against you. The Lord is very hard.

I know all your good things, but I am against you. Oh, if we know the heart, we can even sense the agonizing, agitating, in the heart of God, I am against you, because you have left. Think, from whence have you fallen? Repent, otherwise I will remove.

In other words, there will be no testimony. I do not know, brothers and sisters, whether you can find out the reason why they have left their first love. The Lord said, you think, wherefore have you fallen? There must be some reason for them to fall away from the first love.

But I wonder if you can find out the reason. The scripture seems to be silent on that. What is the reason, wherefore have they fallen? On what point, for what reason, in what particular occasion, that marks the downfall, the decline of their love? I cannot find anything specific.

If you can find it, please let me know. Because there does not seem to be any specific reason. We can only take it in the more general principle.

And you remember, there is a principle. In Proverbs 16, verse 18, it says, pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before. That is the general principle.

Pride goes before destruction. A haughty spirit before a fall. I wonder if the church in Ephesus falls on that point.

Because of their love towards God, God has so privileged them with such full knowledge of Him. Probably, gradually, they begin to be proud. They have plenty of reason to be proud.

Instead of looking off unto the Lord, they begin to look into themselves. How much we love. How much we love.

And as they begin to be proud of their spiritual achievement, of their spiritual condition, as some people put it, they begin to have spiritual pride. And this is where they begin to think of themselves, instead of thinking of Him. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Maybe, I don't know, maybe they fall in that particular reason. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the danger that is ever present with those who are a little more privileged. If you are not so privileged, you really have no reason to be proud.

But if you are somewhat favoured and privileged, the danger is, you begin to feel you have become something. Remember, that's where you begin to fall. You will fall from your fellowship.

You may still maintain the outward form, continue on, and in a sense, you will try your best to maintain them. That's pride. The inward flame is gone, but the outward form must continue, because if it doesn't continue, people will begin to know, and you are on an entirely false ground.

And that's the reason why the Lord said, if you do not repent, I will remove, because it is not the testimony of Jesus anymore, it is the testimony of yourself. You are trying to maintain. What is the call to overcome? The call to overcome is to restore to the first love.

That absolute perfect love, first love, who is an overcomer? An overcomer is basically a lover. Do you think that to be an overcomer, you have to do some great things, accomplish some great task? To be an overcomer just requires one thing, to be a lover of God. That's all that is.

That is the call of an overcomer. We move on to the second letter, Smyrna. We know that the church suffered a great deal.

There you will find the call is for faithfulness unto the end. As Christ emptied himself and became, as Christ humbled himself as a man, and become obedient unto God, even unto death, and that's the death of the cross, as Christ suffered to the very end, so the call is that we too may be faithful. Anyone who is to be faithful to God must suffer.

These two things go together. We must suffer many persecutions in order to enter into the kingdom of God. If we follow the Lamb wherever he goes, we have to walk the way of the cross, because this is the way.

Are we willing to suffer for him? For his sake? Are we ready to go on all the way with him, even in the name of death? Sometimes we wonder why he does not deliver us. He ought to. If we are so faithful to him, he ought to deliver us.

But here you will find in the letter it says, some of you will be put into prison yet. Worst thing will happen yet. And if God just stands back and allows everything to happen, are you offended? Are you willing to go on all the way with him? Faithful to him? Even unto death? What is the call? What is an overcomer? An overcomer is a martyr.

A martyr. One who bears the cross and follows the Lord. You know, very often I have this kind of feeling, oh, if God will give me the privilege of being a martyr.

You know, whenever we read the story of Christian martyrs, we are stirred in our very being. Oh, how we long that we may be privileged. But you are already privileged without knowing it.

And you are always trying to get away from it. A living martyr suffers more than a dead martyr. But are we willing to? Dear brothers and sisters, we live in a time, as the apostle says, people love themselves.

We live in a time of self-love. We love ourselves too much. Oh, especially in this country.

We will not allow us to suffer a little bit. We will go to the utmost for ourselves. This is incompatible with the love of God.

Are we willing to be a living martyr? Are we willing to follow the Lamb with us wherever He goes? Or do we just go to a certain limit and say, now thus far and no more. If you want to go on, come back. You'll come back.

Just like in the song of Solomon. Come back. I'm not going with you, but you'll come back to me.

But you'll find He will never come back. He always goes on. Oh, if we want to go on with Him, we have to go on.

He won't come back. An overcomer is a lover. And then you move on to the third letter.

And there you'll find in the letter to Pergamos, to the church in Pergamos, there you'll find worthiness. The mixing of the people of Israel with the Midianites. There's worthiness.

When Satan failed in destroying the church by persecution, he tried to endorse the church and give favors to the church. And that's where worthiness. On the one hand, the doctrine of Balaam, worthiness.

On the other hand, the teaching of the Nicolaitans, professionalism. Here you'll find worthiness and professionalism come together. They always go together.

Is it not that we are in a worse position than the church in Pergamos at that time? Oh, how the world have a great place in Christianity. And professionalism is prevailing. The call to overcome is the call to be separated.

Come out. Come out of professionalism and be united with the real. So an overcomer is basically a separatist.

Then you come to the fourth letter. The letter to the church in Tyre. There you'll find in that church, not only corrupted condoms, but corrupted.

The church is reduced into a corrupted, like a mustard seed, that has grown abnormally into a big tree. And all the birds of the air rest upon it. It has become a big system, full of corruption.

And yet, boast of mystery, mysterious, superstitious. But a gigantic system. And the call of the Lord is for purity.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are living in a time of great mystery. And what the Lord is looking for is pureness. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

We do not know what that mystery is. The mystery of Satan. And do not try to know it.

If only we know what has been given to us. Once delivered, people may call you ignorant. But blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The call for overcomers is the call for purity. I believe that as the age is coming to a close, God is looking more and more for purity, for pureness. When a thing is pure, it may be reduced to very little, but it's pure.

And that's what God wants. The overcomers are the pure in heart. They know nothing.

Then you come to the fifth letter. The letter to the church in Sardis. They have a name that is living, but they are dead.

In other words, they have a form, but without life. What God is looking for today is life. Not just a name.

You may have a good name in the past. You may inherit a good name. But what God is looking for is life.

Is there life there? Is there the true life there? You know why is it that the church in Ephesus has lost its life? You may find in the very beginning of that letter. When the Lord said, He is the one who has the seven spirits. When you get lost, when you lose your contact with the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit of God, you miss life.

Life is Christ. Christ is life. Christ is life.

But that life can only be experienced in the Holy Spirit. It is only when we are in living relationship, in living communication with the Spirit of God, then you are full of life. Full of the life of Christ.

Once if that contact is lost, life. The name remains, but the life. So it is most important for those who respond to God, to Christ, must maintain a continuous living relationship with the anointing that is in you.

It shall teach you in all things. And if you obey the anointing, you shall abide, abide in Christ. That's where you'll find life.

Then the sixth letter. The letter to the church in Philadelphia. What is it that the Lord is looking for in that church? I think probably what the Lord is looking for is this thing.

The Lord said, you have a little power. The Lord is looking for power. Spiritual power.

Power in that church. You have a little power. But that little power is real power.

Sometimes we may have a great deal of power, but it may not be the real power. The Lord is looking for spiritual power. Where does that power come from? It comes from, first, you have not denied my name.

Which means, they have been continuously under the name of our Lord. You have kept my word. Which means, the word of my patience.

The word of the cross. And you'll love Philadelphia. On the basis of these three things, you are under the authority of the Lord, of the head.

You have walked the way of the cross. Keep the word of my patience. And you'll have love.

This is. This is spiritual power. It may not seem to be very great to the world.

And yet the Lord said, you have a little power. That's it. That's the power.

Are we powerful before God? Do we have power? And then lastly, the letter to the church in Laodicea. What the Lord is looking for in that church is reality. We know that that church lives in a pretension, a falsehood.

They say, we are rich. We are not lacking anything. We have everything.

Probably they did have something in the beginning. And yet the Lord said, you do not know that you are poor, miserable, naked. In other words, they are living in a falsehood.

They are not living in reality. And the Lord suggests to them, advises them, to buy the gold, refined by fire, living faith. To buy the white garment.

The righteousness of the saints. Practical righteousness. And I shall.

Spiritual insight. They have to pay a cost to get these things. But what the Lord really desires is reality.

He is the Amen, the true one. Dear brothers and sisters, we are living in a world of falsehood. And very often, even in our Christian, there is much that is false.

We are deceiving ourselves. We are under a great deception. And it really needs the Spirit of God to awaken us.

To see that how much is real and how much is unreal. One day, that which is unreal must pass. And when that day comes, we do not know how much remains.

Only that which remains. So the Lord is really looking for reality, spiritual reality. Now, dear brothers and sisters, all these are real to Christ.

He is the Son of Man, full of life. He is full of life, full of light, full of glory, full of righteousness, full of love, full of everything. This is what He is.

And this is what He is looking for in His Church. What He is looking for in you and in me. All the others, does not really matter.

Today, the call is out. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says. The Spirit of God is speaking.

But do we have the ear to hear? He is looking for Himself. That is what He is looking for. You may have many things in your life that are good, but that is not what He is looking for in you.

He is trying to find Himself in His Church. Will the Lord find Himself in His Church? How much can He find among His own? That which corresponds to Him, that which responds to Him, constitutes the nature. So, dear brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus, He is the Overcomer.

And He is calling us to overcome. An Overcomer is not a superman. Is not a superman.

Is not a giant. Is not one who has done something great and spectacular. An Overcomer is a lover, basically.

And then so on. In other words, He is one who responds to the Lord. Or you use the word that is very popular now, He is a normal Christian.

A normal. So may the Lord be gracious to us. O Lord, do open our eyes to see, to see Thee as the Overcomer, full of life, full of glory, that we may be so taken up with Thyself, that our whole being, our whole attention may be focused upon Thee.

We may forget all the other things, but seeking for one thing only, that Thyself shall be formed. O how we praise and thank Thee that Thou art not looking for any foreign things in our lives. Thou art just looking for Thyself in us.

And we do desire to give ourselves to Thee, that Thou mayst have a greater place in our lives, greater and greater place, that Thy heart may be filled with joy.

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