

Reign in Christ

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding Scripture and the whole counsel of God in order to avoid being deceived by Satan and to be saved from sin.

Duration: 59:04

Scripture: John 17:17

Topics: "Overcoming Sin", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being overcomers in Christ, focusing on the need to love the truth about ourselves and to continually seek to overcome challenges and sins. It highlights the significance of not getting discouraged or condemned, but rather facing the truth with humility and a desire to be transformed into pillars in the house of God. The message stresses the call to be faithful, persevere, and overcome as Jesus overcame, ultimately inheriting all things in the final day.

Transcript

I would like to begin by speaking about the New Heavens and the New Earth and who are going to dwell there, and it describes this New Jerusalem as a bride adorned for her husband and how God is going to dwell in the midst of his people, and then it says, after describing all those things, he's going to make everything new, verse 5, for whom is this? Verse 7, he who overcomes will inherit these things and I will be his God and he will be my son. Now, it's a very common mistake that Christians make to take one verse and make a doctrine out of it, and that is how lots of the cults have developed. They got their favorite verse and they build a huge doctrine around that verse and that's about all they see, and for them that is a major part of the Bible, 90% of the Bible is that verse.

Now, it's not just the cults. If you go to the average believer and someone goes to him and says, hey, I'm an unbeliever, you can try this out if you don't believe me. You can go to a good pastor or believer and tell him, I'm an unbeliever, how can I be a son of God? I don't think anybody would point you to this verse, he who overcomes all things, he will be my son.

You think anybody will point this verse out? No. They'll point some other verse like, as many as received him, then he gave the authority to be the children of God. It's true.

That's John 112. But you know, everything in that verse depends on what it means to receive him. There are a lot of expressions used in Christendom which are not found in the Bible.

If you understand it correctly, it doesn't matter. You know, we don't have to express things in the Bible in the same way, provided the meaning is the same. We know, for example, one of the great emphasis in the New Testament is on belief.

But we know that belief is not what we understand. And somebody asks you, do you believe that? Is so-and-so the president of India? Do you believe that? You say, yes, I believe so-and-so is the president of India. Well, that's not the type of belief that the New Testament speaks about.

We know that. Because there is a belief which is just an acceptance of a certain fact. And there's a belief which is a committing of oneself, like in a marriage, where a woman trusts that man and commits herself to him.

So that one word, believe, is so important to understand it correctly. Because our eternal destiny depends on that. Or receive.

As many as received Him, to them He gave the privilege to be the children of God. We tell people who want to be born again, ask Jesus to come into your heart. Yeah, but you'll never find that in Scripture.

In Scripture it's always, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But because that word believe is so misunderstood, and millions of people say they believe in Jesus Christ, and we know they're not born again, so we have to rephrase that, so that we explain to people what it really means. So, I find personally, that since Scripture doesn't contradict Scripture, I believe that every place where it says how we can be a son of God must all mean the same thing.

It can't be contradictory. I'll just show you a few examples. Here it says, only those who overcome are going to be sons.

And they're only going to inherit all these things, all the things mentioned above. But most believers have the idea, whether I overcome or not, I'm going to inherit all these things. Well, if that's the case, then God must be a liar.

God's Word anyway. Either God's Word is a lie, or this is not God's Word. One of the two.

If this is God's Word, then it's a lie, or this is not God's Word. Otherwise, if this is God's Word and it's true, then it's only those who overcome who will inherit all these things. And in contrast, the opposite is mentioned in verse 8, but here are the opposite of those who overcome, the cowardly, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, liars.

They'll be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. And then, let me show you another verse in 1 John, in chapter 5. See, John is the one who speaks a lot about overcoming. And it says here, 1 John 5.4, that whoever is born of God overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that's overcome the world, our pain. So, everyone who is born of God is an overcomer. If he doesn't overcome, you wonder whether he's had a genuine experience.

Because it says here, whoever is born of God overcomes the world. I turn to 2 Corinthians in chapter 6. Here it says, verse 17, 2 Corinthians 6.17, Therefore, come out from their midst. He's talking about those who are in fellowship with idols, or darkness, verse 14, and idols, verse 16, etc.

Come out from among them, verse 17, and be separate, and touch not what is unclean, and I will welcome you, and I'll be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. So, who is a son and daughter? Those who come out and are separate. That's the way to be a son and daughter.

God says, then, I'll be a father to you. So, to whom is God a father? Well, many will say, those who accept Christ as their Savior, God is their father. True.

But it also means that they come out from the midst of people and don't touch what is unclean. And God says, I'll be a father to you. Or, take another verse in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5, Matthew chapter 5, how to be a son of God.

In Matthew chapter 5, the end of the Sermon on the Mount, it says, verse 43, middle of the Sermon on the Mount, sorry. You've heard it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

So, what about a person who doesn't love his enemy, doesn't pray for those who persecute him? Does it mean the Lord meant that, well, even if you don't love your enemy and you don't pray for those who persecute you, you'll still be a son of your Father. These are just examples. I wanted to show you how many people have favorite verses when they want to understand something.

If somebody were to come and ask, how can I be a son and a daughter of God? They won't go to 2 Corinthians 6 and say, you've got to come out and be separate, don't touch the unclean thing. Or if somebody says, how can I be a son of God? They won't go to Matthew chapter 5 and say, you've got to love your enemies and bless those who curse you. We've got other verses which we go to.

As I said, it all depends on what it means to receive. So, when we recognize that Satan himself quoted a scripture to Jesus to try and lead him astray, don't you think that it's possible that Satan could quote a scripture to lead us astray? And he has led millions of people astray by quoting one scripture and makes them understand it according to the dictionary meaning. There are millions of people today who think that believe means, well, I believe in the Lord Jesus just like I believe that the sun rises in the morning or something like that.

And they believe that the devils fool them. But Jesus corrected it by saying, but it is also written. Don't just quote one verse, Satan.

See what the other verse says. You put both together, and you get the truth. So, when we put all the scriptures together, I've just shown you some of them, as to how to be a son of God, it means a lot more than just saying, Lord Jesus, come to my heart.

And that's the reason why you have such a lot of shallow Christianity in the world today. And even in churches that start out so well, after a while, it becomes shallow. Because standards go down, as I said, on Sunday, everywhere.

Standards go down. And that's because we're not taking all of scripture. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 28.

I mentioned this too the other day, that there were two sides to the Great Commission. One was to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And God would confirm His word with signs following.

The sick would be healed. Demons would be cast out. And that happens even today.

And then the other side of the Great Commission, just like the other side of a coin, is, here in Matthew 28, again going to all nations and now make disciples. And here there's no mention of miracles or any such thing. Here it is a question of teaching people obedience.

Make disciples and teach them to observe every single thing I commanded you. And if you do that, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Now, isn't it true that almost every Christian takes that verse, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age, and applies it to themselves, even if the rest of that verse is not true in their life? To whom did Jesus say, lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age? He said, if you decide in your life that you're going to go and make disciples in every place you go, and you're going to teach them to obey everything I commanded you, then I am with you always to the end of the age.

I think a lot of believers don't experience the Lord's presence with them, because they don't fulfill the conditions. There are many, many examples of this. For example, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

It's not found in scripture. Scripture 1 John 1.7 is, if we walk in the light, God is in the light, then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. So, dear brothers and sisters, be careful that Satan doesn't fool us by making us think we've got a promise when we haven't fulfilled the condition.

He who overcomes will inherit all things. And the devil says, oh no, you don't have to overcome. You'll still inherit all things.

Remember what Jesus said, Satan is a liar and the father of lies. And remember that he deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve, by telling them a lie. God had said, if you eat this fruit, you will die.

In other words, you'll be cut off from me. And Satan said, oh no, you won't die. That's okay.

Whether you eat it or don't eat it, it'll be the same. And they believed it. So, in the New Testament, we read in Romans 8.13, if you live after the flesh, you will die.

Talking to believers, if you live after the flesh, you'll die. And the devil says, oh no, you won't die. You'll be alright.

And do you know the number of believers who would rather believe the devil than believe God's word? Because, when you believe the devil, you can live as you like. And imagine that everything is going to be alright. But when you take God's word seriously, you find that there are warnings there.

If we take those warnings seriously, we protect ourselves. I'll give you another example. In John's Gospel chapter 16, it says, John's 16, the last verse, these things I have spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace.

In the world, you'll have tribulation. What did Jesus say? In Him, we will have peace. But in the world, we'll have tribulation.

Now today, when a preacher says, in the world, you'll have prosperity, they'd rather believe that. Jesus said, in the world, you'll have tribulation. Or when a person says, in me, in Christ, you'll have prosperity, Jesus said, no, in me, you'll have peace.

So, there are many verses like this, where if we are not familiar with scripture and the word of God, we are going to be deceived. And I think of what, when the rich man told Abraham, please send Lazarus from paradise to my brothers, so that they at least will repent and don't come to hell. You know what Abraham said to the rich man? They've got the Bible.

If they don't believe the Bible, you're not going to believe even if someone goes back to them from heaven. That was his answer. They have the Bible.

It's the last verse of Luke 16. So, I believe that's the word that comes to us. They have the Bible.

If they don't read that, and if they don't believe what's written there, and they believe all the fanciful things that preachers tell them on television, or in books, or in sermons, they've got only themselves to blame. They have the Bible. And the Bible says, in the world, you'll have tribulation.

Why should you be surprised then, if you have tribulation? Because the world said, but at the same time, in the world, where there's tribulation, Jesus said, in Him, we will have peace. In the midst of all this tribulation, we have peace, because we have a Father who cares for us, who will not allow the hair of our head to be touched without His permission. That's why we have peace.

But the tribulation will be there. That's not going to change. In other words, we're not going to have an easy time in this world if we are Christians.

If you went to the first century Christians, who were being persecuted and chased in second, third century particularly, running from cave to cave, full-hearted disciples, people whose relatives were being killed because they believed in Jesus, and they wouldn't say that Caesar is Lord, and they were being killed. And you went and told them, hey, you know, you've got to just trust the Lord, man. You'll be prosperous, and you'll be living in a big house.

You won't be running from cave to cave. They'd have straightaway called you a false prophet. But today, nobody calls such people false prophets.

You know why? Because we love to hear that message, that in the world, you will have prosperity. And when we love to hear something which is contrary to what Jesus taught, God Himself will allow you to be deceived, because you don't love the truth. See, it says that in 2 Thessalonians in chapter 2. I believe this is, I've often said that, one of the most frightening verses in the whole Bible, because we have spoken about deception.

And the Bible says in Ephesians 4, I think it's verse 22, that our lusts are deceitful. And it says in Jeremiah 17, that our heart is deceitful. It says in Revelation 12, verse 9-11, that Satan is a deceiver.

Do you get it now? Satan is a deceiver. The lusts in our flesh are deceitful, and our heart is deceitful, above all things. You know, our only hope against the deception of our lusts, and the deception of the devil, and the deception of our heart, is if God gives us light.

Then none of these things, we won't be deceived by any of them. But if God Himself also deceives us, then there is no hope at all. That's why I say this is a terrifying verse.

This is the one verse in scripture where it says God will deceive certain people. It says here in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 11, for this reason God will send upon them a deceiving influence. You can look it up in any translation, that's exactly what it says.

God will send a deceiving, deluding influence on people, so that they believe what is false. Imagine God making people believe what is false, so that they will be judged. Now for this reason, when you read a word like for this reason, I really want to know, why is God, what is the reason why God allows people to be deceived? And that's in the previous verse, they did not receive the love of the truth, so as to be saved from sin.

It's not because they didn't get healed of their diseases, it's not because they didn't become prosperous, it's because they didn't want to be saved from their sins. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, first promise in the New Testament, because He shall save His people from their sins. He didn't come to make us rich, He didn't come to make us healthy, He came to make us holy.

He came to save us from our sins. And when people don't want to be saved from their sins, God will allow them to believe what is false. And look at the millions who are believing that.

Look at the millions today who don't want to be saved from sin, who want to be rich, who want some gift of the Holy Spirit, who want to speak in tongues, who want to fall down when somebody lays hands on them, and all types of things today. But how many of them want to be saved from their sins? And when we don't want to be saved from our sins, look what happens. God allows them to believe what is false.

And it says here about receiving the love of the truth. There are two types of truths. One is the truth in the Bible.

God's word says, sanctify them. Jesus said in John 17, Father, sanctify them through the truth. Thy word is truth.

And the other is the truth about ourselves. The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of truth. Jesus said, when the spirit of truth has come, John 16, He will lead you into all the truth.

Let's look at that verse. John's Gospel. He's called the spirit of truth.

And it says here in John 15 and verse 26, when the helper comes, whom I will send to you, that is the spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father. And He's going to come and convict the world of sin, etc. And He will lead you into all the truth.

That's also in one of those chapters. It says, now what is all the truth that the Holy Spirit is going to lead us into? First of all, all of the truth of God in His word. I don't mean truth about whether Christ is going to come before the tribulation or after the tribulation.

That's also truth. But that's not as important truth as the truth that helps us to be saved from sin. Or the truth about whether healing is for today or whether all speak in tongues.

Those are also truths. But they're not as important as the truth that saves us from sin. So there in 2 Thessalonians 2, it says, they didn't receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Some of these other doctrines, whether women should cover their heads or men should not cover their heads, or whether women should wear ornaments or not, and whether we should wear dresses as pastors or be called pastors or bishops. Well, those are not major truths. We're talking about the truth that leads us to salvation.

There are many, many truths in Scripture, but here it's talking about the truth that leads us to salvation, to be saved from sin. The Spirit of truth will lead us into all the truth. In other words, it's possible for us to be saved from every known sin.

Now I may know only 10% of my life, but in that 10%, I'm to be totally saved. The other 90%, as little by little as God gives light, I can be saved. But I can't be saved until I get light on something.

But the point is this. The truth of Scripture and the truth concerning myself. Now if I don't receive the love of the truth, for example, in some particular situation, the Lord shows me that I was proud.

I don't accept it. I don't receive the love of the truth. The Lord says, you were proud there.

That's why I didn't give you grace. And that's why you fell into sin. No, but I don't accept it.

God says, okay. He's not going to force us. But when we don't receive the love of the truth, we are opening ourselves up to the rest of that verse.

God sends upon them a deceiving influence so they believe what is false. What will happen to such a man after some time? I'll tell you. He'll believe that he's spiritual when he's not.

Do you know multitudes of people today in the world who think they are baptized in the Holy Spirit? And I don't believe one bit they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Some of them are the biggest lovers of money on the face of the earth. How could they be baptized in the Holy Spirit? But they call themselves pastors who are spirit filled.

God has allowed them to believe what is false about themselves. Do you know the number of people in the world who think they are born again just because they repeated a formula or sat in the right church? So many people who imagine they are born again. I'm born again.

I'm okay. God allows them to believe what is false because they don't receive the love of the truth. If you are serious, if you want to marry somebody and you're very eager to marry that person, you can convince yourself that that person, that boy or girl is born again because you're so keen to marry that person.

Oh yeah, yeah, he is born again or she's born again. Okay. You don't face up to the truth.

God will allow you to believe what is false. I tell you it's dangerous. We can imagine I want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and deep down in my heart I don't want holiness.

I don't want power to be a witness for Jesus Christ. All I want to do is speak in tongues so that I can say I joined the club. God will allow us to believe what is false.

We'll mutter something and say I think we're baptized in the Holy Spirit. There are multitudes of people like this because they don't take scripture with scripture. They don't receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

So that's a warning. Or for example, you know for example supposing I've always held in my mind a certain doctrine and then as I read the scriptures and I study the scriptures I find that that is not what the Bible teaches about that particular subject whether it's about a baptism or baptism in the Holy Spirit or speaking in tongues or any subject or holiness or victory over sin. And I come to that and scripture seems to teach that.

But I'm stubborn. I say hey I can't give up this thing which I've held. Maybe somebody's afraid he'll be thrown out of his church or somebody will be upset with him or his family will be disturbed if he accepts that view.

And so he pushes that out and says okay let me go to the next verse. He doesn't love the truth so that he can be saved from disobedience. See everything I don't do in scripture is disobedience.

So here's an opportunity for me to, I discover hey I haven't obeyed that. And I sort of brush it aside because that's not what I've always believed or that's not what my parents believe or what my church believes or something like that. And I put it aside.

I can put it aside. And God will send a deceiving influence upon me that'll make me feel nice that I'm spiritual when I'm not. I want to ask you my brothers and sisters.

Have you ever considered the possibility? Please listen. Have you ever considered the possibility that you may not be as spiritual as you think you are? I think most of us have some idea of how spiritual we are. We may not think that we are the most spiritual people in India or the world but we have a certain idea of this is my level of spirituality.

But have you considered the possibility that it may not be true? That God may be allowing you to believe what is false. Those are the exact words of scripture. Believe what is false because in some area you did not accept the truth about yourself when God tried to show it to you.

You argued against God or you just turned your head away from that truth. Okay. He's not going to force you.

He'll say it and he's going to leave it. I mean he doesn't treat us like little children. Do you know that one of the differences between Old Covenant and New Covenant among many differences.

One of the differences you'll see that if you read Galatians chapter 3 and chapter 4 that in the Old Covenant God treated people like little children. I'm going to show you that verse. Before the faith came, Galatians 3.23. Before the faith came we were kept in custody under the law and the law became our tutor.

You know like little children need a tutor. The law was like a tutor to lead this little child to maturity to Christ. So that now we've come to faith.

We're not under a tutor. That means we're not under the law now. And now we are sons.

There's children, babies who are under the law. When we become sons we're under grace which is a million times higher than law. But because most people in the world haven't understood grace and have misunderstood grace they think it's better to be under law than under grace.

It's a million times better to be under grace than under law. The standard is higher. You've now become sons.

You don't need a tutor it says. And then he speaks about where chapter 4 verse 3. While we were children, you know little babies, we were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But now, verse 6, you are sons.

That's the difference between old covenant and new covenant. One we are babies, the other we are sons. One we are little children, the other we are mature sons.

Okay, now let's see. How do we tell little children? How do we talk to little children? We tell them, come on you do that. We tell a three year old, son you got to do that.

He says, I'm not going to do it. You got to do it. You have to do it.

No, I'm not going to do it. Then daddy takes a stick or something and he makes him do it. You got to do it.

You're not going to give in to him. But supposing you're talking to a 23 year old son, how long are you going to tell him? You got to do it when he says I'm not going to do it. You tell him once perhaps, maybe twice, and then leave him.

That's what God does. That's the disadvantage of being a son. That God tells you something, hey this is the truth about yourself.

I don't want to listen to it. Okay. God says I'm not going to keep telling you.

You're not a little child. You're 23 years old. You're a son.

You don't want to hear it. It's okay. It's terrible that God tells me something and I won't listen to him.

He says, okay, go your way. You know, I believe with all my heart that multitudes of believers, God has just left them like that. For one reason, they don't love the truth.

Why is that? Because they're proud. I can't be so bad. After all, I'm pretty spiritual, really.

I would encourage you to consider, please my brothers and sisters, I would encourage you all to consider there is far more pride in you than you think. If it were not so, such abundant grace would be poured upon your life, the result of which would be you would never be discouraged. You would never condemn yourself.

Never. You would always rejoice. You'll never be in a bad mood.

You'll always be in triumph. In other words, the type of life Paul describes, that will be your experience when we receive abundance of grace. It says in Romans 5, those who receive abundance of grace reign in life as kings.

What does it mean to reign in life as a king? It means I don't get discouraged like Elijah to sit under a juniper tree and say, oh, I've had enough. That means I don't fall into sin like David when he looks at a woman and lusts. It means that I don't get angry like Moses to break even the tablets of stone.

They didn't receive abundance of grace. They were under law. They were children who had a tutor.

Moses was a child, according to Galatians 3. Elijah was a child, according to Galatians 3. But now God has sent his son so that we don't have to be children. We can be sons. But we got to receive the love of the truth.

Then we shall be overcomers. It's God's will that every one of us should be overcomers. I was impressed about that in Revelation.

You know, I often used to think that we all know out of the seven churches, five of them, the elders were backslidden, terribly backslidden. You know, one had lost his first love and the other was following the teaching of Balaam and going after money and mingling with idols. And another one was allowing his wife, Jezebel, to influence church matters.

And another one had a name that he was a great preacher but he was dead. And another one was lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, just satisfied that he had a lot of this world's goods. Those are the five bad elders.

They were elders of churches, New Testament churches, but backslidden elders. Yeah, an elder can be a backslider. Paul said, I'm afraid, lest after having preached to others, not only I'll be a backslider, but I won't even be accepted before God.

He said, therefore I discipline myself. Paul lived in that fear and so he never became a backslider. And if we live in that fear, we'll never become backsliders.

But if we sit back and say, oh well, I'm okay, then we're in danger. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. But these five elders were backsliders.

And so the churches, you can imagine, if a church has got a backslidden worldly elder, it's pretty sure that that church is also going to be backslidden and worldly. I've seen that all around India and everywhere, where the pastor or leader or elder is backslidden, half-hearted, cold. The church becomes like that.

And so to all those churches the Lord says, he who overcomes. At the end of each of those messages it says, he who overcomes. And I understood that to mean, okay, the elder is backslidden, never mind him, but you sitting there, you young brother, you young sister, why do you not overcome? Well, you say, oh well, my elder is like that, he doesn't teach us properly, he's backslidden.

That's got nothing to do with you. The Lord doesn't accept that excuse. To all those five churches he says, but if you overcome, there's a challenge to people in backslidden churches with backslidden elders, that you must be an overcomer.

It's a personal challenge. The Lord realizes that everyone in the church will not be overcomers. And I believe we are living in those days all over the world.

It's very difficult to find a spiritual church. You can find spiritual people, but to find a spiritual church, it's very difficult. Maybe in China perhaps, where there's a lot of persecution, but in countries like ours where there's no persecution, it's very difficult to find a spiritual church.

But there are spiritual people. And if you want to be a spiritual person, you have to fight a battle all the time. All the time.

You have to keep on opening yourself to the truth, love the truth, ask God to show you the truth about yourself, and say, Lord, I want to be saved from that. I want to be saved from that pride. You know, we've got to consider the possibility that there's a lot of selfishness in us.

A lot more selfishness and self-centeredness than we think. To face up to it and say, Lord, there must be. I mean, I'm talking about myself.

I don't preach what I don't practice. I say, Lord, there's so much of selfishness in me. In my flesh dwells nothing good, and I want to get light on it before I leave this earth as much as possible, purify myself as He is pure.

But it's selfishness and pride and love of money is of course linked to selfishness. But these are the two things particularly we get light on more and more and more and more and more. How we seek our own, not the things of Christ.

And so, if we're getting light on this, we can be overcomers. And the call comes to the individual. Now, the thing that struck me was the other two churches which had good elders.

You know, one church was the church in Smyrna, where it says, hey, you fellas, Revelation 2.8, your elder is nothing to complain on. Your tribulation, your poverty, and people are persecuting you, and you're going to suffer, and you're going to be put in prison, but be faithful unto death. Yeah, there's no complaint against that church in Smyrna.

And they're facing tribulation, facing poverty, and it doesn't say anything particularly good about that church, but there's nothing bad. And then, it speaks about another church in Revelation 3 and verse 7, which is even better, where the elder brother is such a radical, wholehearted brother. It says here in verse 8, the Lord says, I put before you an open door, and because you have a little power, and you've kept my word, and you've not denied my name, there are people who are persecuting you who belong to the synagogue of Satan.

They say they are Jews, or today they say they are Christians, but they are not Christians. They tell lies. You know the people who say they are Christians, who say they are believers and are not believers? I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

You know, that's how God honors his servants. He will make people know that he loves them. Oh, I want people to know that God loves me.

I want the world to know that I am a person whom Jesus loves. You know, that was John in his epistle. He never says John.

He never says John. He just says a disciple whom Jesus loved. Not a disciple who loved Jesus.

No, that would be difficult to say. But a disciple whom Jesus loved. Oh Lord, I want to be like that.

I will make them know that I have loved you. Will you pray that prayer? Lord Jesus, make people around me know, not that I am a great man, but that you love me, that you care for me, that the lions have fallen to me in goodly places, that I have a good heritage, because I am loved by the Father. It's a wonderful thing.

I will make them know that I have loved you. Boy, wonderful. And because you have kept the word of my perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing that will come on the whole world.

Hold fast what you have, so that no one takes your crown. Now this is a wonderful church with a wonderful elder, but even in such a church he says, verse 12, he who overcomes. Even to the church in Smyrna, he who overcomes.

Revelation 2.11. So it's not just in the five churches which have got backslidden elders, backslidden church, worldly churches that you've got to be overcomers. Supposing you're in the midst of a wonderful church, with a radical wholehearted elders, who are on fire for God. That doesn't guarantee anything.

You've still got to be an overcomer there. In other words, Philadelphia is the best of these seven churches. And let's say that you're sitting in the best church in the whole world.

You know what the Lord's message is to you is? Be an overcomer. Because sitting in the best church in the world does not guarantee that you'll be an overcomer. Even there the message is, be an overcomer.

And I will make you a pillar, verse 12, in the temple of God. I'll make you a pillar in the church. Be an overcomer.

It's not restricted to brothers. How many of you sisters believe that you can be a pillar in the church of God? You know, if you don't believe it, it won't happen. Unfortunately, there are lots and lots of sisters who say, Oh, I'm a sister.

I can't be a pillar. I'll just be a doormat. But God says, I want you to be a pillar.

Why can't you be a pillar in the church? One who supports others. One who holds up the weight of others. One who doesn't crumble when people put some weight on you.

That's a pillar. You know, these are pillars you have here on the side of the church. They're supporting the weight of this roof.

You take all those pillars, it collapses. Pillars are meant to take weight. God says, I want pillars in the church.

Be an overcomer. He who overcomes will inherit all things one day. I will be his God and he will be my son.

So the book of Revelation speaks a lot about this overcoming, overcoming, overcoming. And I believe that that should be the focus of our thinking as we approach the end of the age. Lord, I want to be an overcomer.

And a major part of that is to love the truth. Whenever God shows me, acknowledge it. Acknowledge it.

When God says, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You need to be baptized with fire. Maybe you were once upon a time, but you're not today.

Acknowledge it. Don't ever quote a date like so many Pentecostals and Charismatics do on such and such a date. Who's interested in that date? You may have had a genuine experience way back there 20 years ago or 2 years ago or last week.

And you may not be filled with the Spirit today. Because it's a continuous ongoing experience. There's a difference between being filled with the Spirit once and being a Spirit-filled believer.

The Acts of the Apostles speaks about certain people who were full of the Spirit. Which is different from people who were baptized in the Spirit. A person may have been baptized in the Spirit and may not be described as full of the Spirit.

That's like saying, your petrol tank was filled yesterday or last week. So what? Filled to the brim. May have overflowed.

So what? May be empty today. Isn't that possible? So with your heart. You were filled last week, but you may be empty today.

Don't let the devil make you believe what is false. Think of that verse, God Himself will make them believe what is a lie. Because they did not receive the love of the truth.

I tell you, I'm mortally scared of not facing up to the truth about myself. You know, one who is serving the Lord like me and has been for the last 40 years. You can imagine that I get a lot of letters and emails criticizing, abusing, accusing, saying all types of things.

You know what I do? I don't reply to them. That's one thing. But I'll tell you something, I read them.

I read all of them. And some of them I read two, three times. Written by people who hate me.

You know why? Because I believe that our enemies tell us more truths about ourselves than our friends. Do you believe that? Do you believe that your enemy will tell you more truths about yourself than your friends? When was the last time a friend came up to you and said, brother, I think you're pretty proud. When was the last time a friend of yours came and told you that? When was the last time a friend of yours came up to you and told you, I think it is downright selfish of you to behave like that.

If he was a really good friend, a Christ-like friend, and those are very rare. One in a million, a Christ-like friend. He would tell you, like Jesus would tell Peter, that's the voice of Satan.

Get behind me, Satan. Boy, only Jesus, someone who loved like Jesus would do that. But most friends never tell us anything which they know will hurt us.

They allow us to go to hell. They allow us to remain carnal. Because they are worried about relationship.

I don't want to spoil a good relationship. Let him go to hell, never mind. But let me keep the relationship.

I can see he's downright carnal, but let me not tell him that, because that will spoil our relationship. It's like a doctor who says, it's pretty clear he's got cancer, but I won't tell him, because that will ruin our relationship. I won't tell him.

I'll just hide the x-ray and talk about, you know, everything's okay. Liars. They're not friends.

Jesus is a true friend. So to love the truth, our enemies tell us more truths about our... Enemy couldn't care less for relationship. He'll tell us exactly what we think of us.

And perhaps there's some truth in what he says. That's why I read the letters of my critics. Every letter, email I get, that criticizes me, accuses me, I read it.

I say, Lord, there may be some truth there. I don't get condemned. Oh, no.

Self-condemnation, discouragement on no entry roads for me. I obey the traffic rules. I never go down those roads.

Nobody can make me condemned, because the Bible says, who is there to condemn you? God is on your side. Who is there to accuse you? Christ is there to intercede for you. So I never get discouraged or condemned.

Impossible. But I read them to find out the truth about myself. I mean, if there's a black mark on my face, and all of you are too kind to tell me it's there, and some enemy of mine says, hey, look at your face, man.

Go and look in the mirror. Oh, I see. Hey, all my friends never told me that.

And I discover something. We're too kind to one another. You know, there are a lot of thoughts we have about people, which we won't tell them, even our good friends.

For example, somebody speaks, and he's got bad breath. Will you tell him that? When was the last time you told somebody that? You don't, because we're too kind. But an enemy will say, hey, man, your mouth's smelly.

Oh, maybe he's true. Thank God that I discover it. I can do something about it.

So it's like that, you know. I mean, those are not serious things. You can go to heaven if your mouth smells, but you can't go to heaven if you've got other things wrong in your life which are more serious.

I believe that if we want to be overcomers, we've got to love the truth about ourselves and say, Lord, I want to be an overcomer. I want to be one who's a pillar in your house. I want to inherit all things in that final day.

And I don't care who it is who tells me the truth, whether I get the truth from scripture, or I get the truth in a meeting, or I get the truth from a friend, or from an enemy. It doesn't matter if it's the truth. And if you're sure that you won't be condemned because you know God's on your side against the devil.

See, that's the thing that encourages me, that I know that God is always on my side against the devil. I don't have the slightest doubt about it. If I'm the biggest sinner on earth and I've committed the worst crime that any believer can ever do.

Think of this. If I have committed the worst crime that any believer on earth can ever do, God is still on my side against the devil. Because God can never be on the side of the devil.

That's completely out of the question. He's on the side of man. Against the devil.

And that's why I can face up to the truth about myself without getting condemned, without feeling discouraged. Because I say, I know God will help me. God has shown me that.

He's going to help me to overcome it. He's going to help me to come through as a victor. And that's why in the last book of the Bible, more than in any other book, you read about overcoming, overcoming, overcoming, overcoming, so many times.

Overcoming, overcoming. Isn't there a message there? Think of Jesus' own words. Maybe we can close with that.

In John 16, the verse that we read at the beginning. Verse 33, the last verse. These things I've spoken to you that in me you might have peace.

In the world you shall have tribulation, but be bold. Take courage. I have overcome the world.

And one more verse, Revelation chapter 3 verse 21, where Jesus says, He who overcomes, I will grant him the privilege of sitting with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and I'm sat down with my father on his throne. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying. Jesus overcame, and sat with the Father on his throne, and He says, you can overcome as I overcame.

He was a man like us, tempted like us, and He overcame like we can overcome. Don't ever lose sight of that truth. So my brothers and sisters, whenever God shows you something about yourself from anybody, don't get offended.

That's the worst thing you can do. Love the truth. Thank you Lord.

Doesn't matter who it came from. Whenever you hear a criticism, don't ask, is that person a friend or an enemy? Just ask, is it true? Judge yourself. We judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

So we just bow our heads for a moment of prayer.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/JaTBoXPdxVw.mp4>
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