

AN OVERCOMER

Key Verse: Revelation 2:1-7

Key Thought: God has called Overcomers!

The seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor hold a special place among all the literature of the Word of God. There are many instances when Jesus spoke to individuals and groups, but these letters show Jesus Christ speaking to the very people He died to save. Most of these letters contain words of Commendation; words of Correction; and words of Challenge. One thing all these letters have in common is that each one concludes with a precious promise to the *overcomers* in each church. The word “*overcomer*” means “*to conquer, or to carry off the victory.*” It refers to saved people who remain faithful to Jesus in the face of enemies, temptations and persecution.

Now, there is a sense in which every believer is an overcomer, or a conqueror. Positionally, because of our faith relationship with Jesus, we are conquerors, ***Romans 8:37***. Through Jesus and His finished work on the cross, we have overcome sin, Satan, death and hell! However, there is another sense in which we can become an overcomer. ***1 John 5:4*** tells us that we as believers will achieve victory over this world and its power.

This seems to be the sense in which the word overcomer is used in ***Revelation 2*** and while every saint of God enjoys absolute victory over death, Hell and Satan, many are not as victorious in their day to day walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Jesus looks at and speaks to these seven churches, He sees believers and non-believers. He sees people who are faithful and people who are not. He sees people who love Him and people who love themselves. As He looks at us this morning , He sees all those classes of people present with us as well.

As Jesus speaks to the overcomers in each church, He is exhorting the faithful, sold-out believers to continue living for the glory of God. He is also challenging those who are not where they need to be to get there, so that they too can experience the life of an overcomer. As He concludes each letter, He makes certain promises to the redeemed people in each of these churches. The promises serve as incentives for the faithful to remain faithful. They also serve as incentives for the unfaithful to get faithful. Every promise He makes in these verses belongs to the saints.

Let's examine these seven *Divine Incentives For Becoming An Overcomer*, and let's allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts. May He teach us the How and give us the Hunger to become overcomers for the glory of His name!

I. THE INCENTIVE OF IMMORTALITY

The Ephesian church. They were busy for God, but they had fallen out of love with Jesus. He calls upon them to remember where they had once been with Jesus and to get back to the place where He was number one in their lives.

His promise to the overcomer is this: They will enjoy a glorious eternity in His presence. They have passed from death unto life. What the first Adam took from them, Jesus has restored to them, ***Romans 5:12, 19***. The “*No Trespassing*” sign that was erected in ***Genesis 3:22-24*** will forever be torn down and we will eat of the tree of life in God's Heaven.

Salvation, restoration of fellowship with God, a home in heaven, everlasting life, these are all great incentives for living the best life possible!

II. THE INCENTIVE OF INVINCIBILITY

Smyrna was a church that was undergoing severe persecution! They were being hounded by their enemies and they are told that some of them will be imprisoned, and others will be put to death. Jesus exhorts them to remain faithful to Him unto death and He will reward them! The Overcomers in the church are promised deliverance from the second death.

What is the second death? ***Revelation 20:11-15*** tells us all there is to know about it. It is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. These redeemed people might have to give their lives down here, but they need not worry about Hell. They have been delivered from the wrath of God through the blood of Jesus, ***Romans 5***. We may face death one day if the Lord doesn't return in our lifetimes, but we need not fear that. After all, Jesus has conquered death and removed its sting, ***1 Corinthians 15:42-57***! We will never go to Hell if we are saved by grace! What an incentive to serve Him! Hallelujah! Hell proof and Heaven bound!

III. THE INCENTIVE OF INTIMACY

The church at Pergamos also endured intense persecution. They were even located in the center of satanic activity. Several of their members had been martyred for Jesus' sake in Pergamos. But there was sin in the camp! Sin which they tolerated and sin for which they were commanded by Jesus to repent. He calls them to come back to Him before He comes to them in judgment!

But there was a faithful remnant in that church. To them, Jesus makes two precious, intimate promises. First, He promises to give them the "*hidden manna*". Just as the children of Israel were given the mysterious manna from heaven to feed them as they wandered through that wilderness, Jesus would nourish these faithful ones as they fought the battles for Him! (*Note: The O.T. manna was a clear picture of Jesus - Small, white, round, sweet, satisfying!*) He also promises to give them a white stone. This may refer to several things, but there are two that stand out. In that culture, it was common to decide court cases and other matters using black and white stones. White stone meant acquittal and black stones meant conviction.

When the judge decided the case, he would put a white stone in an urn for acquittal or a black stone in an urn for conviction. When the verdict was handed down, the urn was tipped over and the stone inside would roll out! He may be telling these believers that they will not be blackballed in Heaven, but that they have been acquitted of their sins! You see, when Jesus saved me, my urn was filled with black stones. Jesus removed them all and dropped in the white stone of grace! Now, when I stand before the Judge and the urn is tipped over, all that will come out against me is grace and I will stand acquitted before the bar of glory!

Another thought is this: Often friends would take a stone they called a "*tessera*". They would break that stone in half and engrave special phrases, words or nicknames for each other on them. Each would carry the half engraved by the other as a constant reminder of their friendship and mutual love. Jesus may be telling these folks that He will one day give them a stone that has on it a special Name for Him. You see, Jesus means something different to each of us. Such is the intimacy of our relationship!

Often, white stones were given to athletes who were victorious in the games. They were also given as tokens of citizenship. When you had been a faithful and productive citizen in a city, they would give you one of these white stones. He is going to nourish us through the wilderness of this world and give us a stone to signify our acceptance into Heaven! The victory we have in Him; our standing as a citizen of glory; and the reflection of the intimacy of our relationship with Him. That alone is an incentive to serve the Lord!

IV. THE INCENTIVE OF INVOLVEMENT

The church in Thyatira was an active church. They were busy in the service of the Lord, and they were recognized for their works. However, they were roundly condemned for allowing a wicked woman to dominate their worship and work at a church. She led them down the path of paganism and idolatry and Jesus promised to deal with her and those who followed her. His judgment would be swift and sure!

But, even in a hotbed of iniquity like Thyatira, there was still a faithful remnant! The overcomers in this church are promised that they will one day reign with Jesus Christ when He established His kingdom. His promise to them is that they will share His rule one day.

This is taught throughout the New Testament – **1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4**. When He returns, we are coming with Him...what a great promise!

They are also promised the “*morning star*”. This is the star that appears during the darkest part of the night, signaling all those who see it that morning is coming! Well, Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star, **Revelation 22:16**. I think this statement is meant to say to them, “It may look dark in the world beloved, but you keep looking to the sky, for I am coming to get you one day!” That is a promise all God’s children share! It may be dark in this world, but you can see Him working and you know from His Word that He is returning someday! That thought can brighten the darkest of nights!

His children will reign with Him one day, but before that ever happens, He will return to this earth to receive us unto Himself and take us away to be with Him, **John 14:1-3**. What a glorious incentive to be faithful to Him!

V. THE INCENTIVE OF IDENTIFICATION

This poor church thought all was well, but Jesus placed His finger on their pulse and pronounce them dead! He challenges them to hold on to the few things they still have going for them. They are to remember how things were and are supposed to be and they are to repent. Otherwise, they will face Him in judgment!

But, even in a dead church there are still those with the life of God in their souls! These people are promised that they will be clothed in white robes, which speak of perfect righteousness. It speaks of being clothed in Jesus Christ's ascribed righteousness. They are promised that their names will remain in the book of life. *(Note: There is no danger of names being taken out of the Lamb's Book of Life, for they were written there before the foundation of the world, **Revelation 13:8**. What Jesus refers to here is the "book of life". It contains the names of all those who have ever lived. As men die without Christ, their names are removed from the book of the living. When men stand before God at the Great White Throne, the book of life and the Lamb's book of life will match perfectly.)* Jesus is merely giving them His blessed assurance that they are eternally saved by His grace.

Then, He promises to confess their names before God, this may refer to His role as our Intercessor, or it may mean that one day, Jesus Himself, will lead us past the pearly gates of glory, through the jasper walls, silent ranks of angels, down the golden street of Heaven, and into the very throne room of God Himself. There He will publicly proclaim us to be one of His Own! Either way, I am glad He knows my name, and that He is not ashamed to admit that I am His, **Hebrews 11:16**.

Let's see, I am dressed in His righteousness, my name is securely and eternally written in the book of life, and He is and will confess my name in Heaven before the presence of the Lord! I say those are some good incentives for being all He has saved me to be!

VI: THE INCENTIVE OF ILLUMINATION

The church in Philadelphia was a blessed church! They were little in strength, but the Lord was using them to reach the world for Jesus. The Lord has no words of complaint for this church. All He has for them is praise.

He has promised them open doors and blessings. He even promised them that their enemies would one day acknowledge the fact that God's blessings rested upon them.

This church was filled with overcomers. They are promised several great blessings. In them, He opens their eyes to the future! First, they are to be set as pillars in the Lord's temple in Heaven. In Philadelphia, it was customary to recognize outstanding citizens by placing a pillar in their honor in one of the temples of the gods. On this pillar would be engraved their name, what they had done to receive it and the names of the officials who had bestowed it. It stood a permanent reminder that this person was someone of note in the community. You see, this little church was getting no recognition or respect in that city, but God said, "I see what you are doing, and I will honor you when you get home!" Second, the phrase, "Shall go out no more" is important. This is a reference to the fact that Philadelphia was built near an active volcano. When that mountain began to rumble, the citizens of the city would be forced to flee. In many ways it was a very unsafe place to live. An earthquake shook the city in 17 B.C. and destroyed many of the temples. The earthquake was so devastating that many of the people refused to move back into town but remained in the countryside instead. Jesus reminds them that they are headed to a place of safety in Heaven. This world may be changing and there may be dangers on every hand, but those who have the door of Heaven opened to them find a place of eternal safety, peace and rest! He is going to place them in His city and give them permanent stability.

Third, these people would be clearly marked as belonging to the Lord. They would bear His Name upon them so that no matter where their duties carried throughout the Universe, they would instantly be recognized as belonging to God and as a citizen of Heaven.

With His promise to securely fix us in Heaven and with His promise to mark us as His Own, we certainly have even more incentive to serve Him faithfully until He fulfills those things for us.

This leaves us with one final incentive.

VII: THE INCENTIVE OF INSPIRATION

The church at Laodicea was a self-centered, materialistic congregation. They felt that they were totally self-sufficient and did not need the Lord. In fact, Jesus is pictured as being outside the church desiring to enter the presence of the family for which He died. He tells them that their attitude and self-righteous posture makes Him sick to His stomach. He challenges them to seek Him and promises to have intimate fellowship with anyone who will open the door to Him.

There are even overcomers in this wicked church. The Lord's promise to them is that they will join Him in His throne, which is also His Father's throne. What He is promising them is the most glorious kind of exaltation. Think of that!

Today, we are seated with Him in Heaven, spiritually speaking, *Ephesians 2:6*. When we get there, He will invite His people to join Him in His glory and in His exaltation. We do not deserve that kind of love, forgiveness, mercy and grace, but it is ours through Him!

If anything were to serve as an inspiring incentive to serve the Lord, the promises of this verse are it!

In Closing, let me ask you. Are you coming to Him by faith and getting down before Him and asking Him for His help. I know I need to do that! How about you? If you want to be all He has saved you to be, then this altar is open to receive you into His presence at the throne of grace.

Place: FCA

Date: December 1, 2024

Time: 10:30

After Service Song: Raise a Hallelujah