

THE WAY TO OVERCOMING

Ephesians 6:10-18—For the rest, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the might of his strength. Put on the panoply of God, that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the devil: because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies. For this reason take to you the panoply of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having accomplished all things, to stand. Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace: besides all [these], having taken the shield of faith with which ye will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one. Have also the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word; praying at all seasons, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

Romans 8:31-39—What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us? He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God who justifies: who is he that condemns? It is Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised up; who is also at the right hand of God; who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, For thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter. But in all these things we more than conquer through him that has loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we do want to thank Thee for being with us throughout these days. Thou hast been good, merciful, gracious, and faithful to us. We thank Thee for bringing us to this last full day. Oh, dear Lord, Thou hast never done anything that is half done, but whatever Thou doest it is completed and perfect. So Lord, we do commit ourselves to Thee for this time. We pray that whatever is still left to be done, Thy Holy Spirit will finish Thy good work in us. Oh, dear Lord, make us Thy corporate vessel to prepare for Thy imminent return. How we long to see Thee face to face! But Lord, enable us to be of some value, some use, in bringing back the King. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

The Lord has gathered us these days for one purpose—to prepare the way of the Lord. I think we all realize that the coming of the Lord is almost here. Even though we may wonder why He, who has promised to return and receive us to Himself, has delayed His coming for twenty centuries, and now we are already in the twenty-first century, and He has not come.

I believe the answer is not with Him; the answer is with us. It is we who have delayed His return because the vessel is not yet ready. The bride has not made herself ready, and the Bridegroom has to wait patiently for the bride to be completed.

So we can see that we have a most serious responsibility. The Lord has trusted us with so much, and we need to be faithful to Him. This is why we have gathered together at this time to learn of Him how to prepare the way of the Lord.

THE LORD HIMSELF IS THE WAY TO PREPARE FOR HIS COMING

I believe when we come to this point, we all realize that the only way to prepare for the return of the Lord is by the way of the Lord Himself. He is the way. We have to come into not only more understanding but even more appropriation of the Lord Jesus in our lives. He said, “I will build My church on this rock.” We know that He has been building His church in these days. He is building His church to be His counterpart, His life companion, to be His like. As long as we are not His like, we cannot be joined to Him as one. Throughout these twenty centuries, the Holy Spirit has been diligently working just for this reason. He is preparing us to be the like of our Lord Jesus. That is to say that we need to be delivered from everything and anything that is in us which is not His like, that is contradictory to Him, or that is His enemy. All these things have to be dealt with and gotten rid of so that He can fill us with His own self.

When the church comes to the stature of the fullness of Christ, then the marriage day has come. The Lord has been preparing and building His church for over twenty centuries already. We are now at the very verge of the completion of that preparation. On the one hand, it is a great privilege. On the other hand, it is a serious responsibility. So that is the reason we have to surrender our whole being absolutely and totally to Christ so that He may be able to finish His blessed work.

As you look at the church around you today, what will be your estimation? Sometimes I feel the more I look at the church today and the more I look at myself, the more hopeless I feel. Thank God, He is the God of hope. He never gives up. Day and night, without ceasing, the Holy Spirit is still working double time—even this day because the bride *has* to be ready.

A REMNANT WAS RAISED UP WHEN ISRAEL FAILED

May I say that if we are expecting to see the whole church matured, probably we will wait eternally. According to the strategy of God, whenever the whole has failed, the Lord raises up a remnant as representative of the whole, and that is what we find in the history of Israel. When Israel failed, both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were in captivity. Nevertheless, God raised up a remnant who returned to Jerusalem which was a barren land and surrounded by enemies. It had been destroyed and devastated—nothing. But thank God, He raised up a remnant who was willing to leave everything behind and go back for one purpose—to rebuild the house of God so that God might have a name upon the earth. When the remnant returned, they built the altar, and they built it with twelve stones which represented the whole tribe of Israel.

THE OVERCOMER PRINCIPLE IN THE CHURCH

This remnant principle is carried over into the New Testament as the overcomer principle. In other words, God raises up a minority who are faithful to Him, who are willing to surrender their whole being to Him, and allow Him to work to the fullest in their lives. They are the first-fruits. And whenever there is first-fruit in the field, it is a guarantee that assures us there will be a harvest. Thank God, He is fulfilling this matter of the first-fruit—the numbers of the overcomers. One day, when the overcomers have reached the stature of Christ, representatively, the Lord will return.

We are not here looking for death but for His return. Century after century has gone by, and many, who had loved the Lord and were waiting for the Lord's return, have passed away. Their waiting for the Lord in their time was not wrong because the Lord can return at any time. In a sense, according to His heart, He would have returned in

the first century because He is so anxious for His bride. But because we are not ready, He waited and waited and waited until today.

THE ENEMY TRIES TO TOUCH GOD THROUGH HIS PEOPLE

We are the generation that has the hope of receiving the Lord back. We are not waiting for death but to be raptured to the throne of God as the welcoming party for the Lord Jesus' second return. So we can see how important this hour is. In a sense, it is very thrilling. Are you waiting to see Him face to face in your lifetime? If you are waiting, what is the way to wait for Him?

The only way to wait for Him is to be like Him, and that means we need to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to get rid of anything that is not of the Lord and add into us all that is of Christ. This is how urgent and how important this conference is!

But as we have mentioned before, the enemy has this knowledge. He knows he cannot touch God directly, so he attempts to touch God through His people, through us. That is the reason our Lord Jesus said; "I will build My church upon this rock and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." That shows us that the enemy will turn all of his wrath, use all his tricks, all his threatenings, and all his power to try and swallow God's vessel. If he can succeed in this, he is able to prolong his own day. So that is why as soon as we turn to Christ and become His possession, we become the enemy's target.

In our Christian life, let us not expect an easy, smooth-sailing because there will be tribulations. Our Lord Jesus said: "In the world, you will have tribulation, but do not be afraid for I have overcome the world." That is the reason why our Christian life is not an easy one. If we try to live our Christian lives by ourselves, sooner or later we will discover it is impossible. There is only one Person who can

live the Christian life and that is Christ Himself. Unless He lives in us, we are not able to overcome the enemy, the world, or sin. We are not even able to overcome ourselves.

WE OVERCOME BY ENDURING THE ASSAULTS OF THE ENEMY

So how can we overcome the enemy and all his allies? I think by now we should realize that the way of overcoming means two things. First, it means that we are able to endure all the assaults and temptations from the enemy. We simply outlast his work. He is trying to pile on us all his tricks and tactics. Sometimes he persuades or cheats. Other times he threatens and persecutes. He will use all kinds of devices to swallow us up. By the grace of God we are able to endure or outlast all his attacks and temptations because God wants to use us as His instrument to defeat the enemy.

WE OVERCOME TO ACCOMPLISH GOD'S MISSION

There is another positive reason to overcome: it means that we are able to carry through and execute the purpose of God to which we are called. So there is both a negative and a positive reason to overcome—overcome the enemy and accomplish God's mission.

This is a spiritual battle. In other words, our enemy is unseen. What we see is flesh and blood, and he does use flesh and blood. But actually, flesh and blood is not our enemy; it is the one who hides behind flesh and blood. He may use the world, sin, and everything in this world whether good or bad. But our real enemies are principalities, authorities, powers of darkness, rulers of wickedness.

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

We cannot fight this battle by sight. If we try, we will be misled by the enemy and miss our target. So this is a fight

of faith. And it says in I Timothy 6 that it is a good fight of faith. If it is faith, then it is not sight; that is to say, it is not something we can see and then fight it. Faith is the unseen thing in us, not something in us done by our own strength. That is work and labor done on our own. In this spiritual battle, it is the fight of faith. We can only do it by faith and not by sight.

Faith is like an anchor that you throw from the ship, and it sinks to the bottom into the unseen, holding the ship in that place firmly. So the anchor of faith is our Lord Jesus. We believe what He has already done on Calvary's cross, and even though this happened two thousand years ago, we believe it is the truth. What our Lord Jesus has done on Calvary's cross is eternal truth, eternal fact, and the work is done. He destroyed the works of the devil and put him out of the world. He has crushed the serpent's head and made a decisive victory over all the evil forces. He has brought all his enemies into captivity and made a show of them by the cross. In other words, the decisive battle has already been fought and won. It was fought between Christ and the devil, and the devil was defeated. That is the fact upon which our faith rests.

FAITH IS THE POWER OF SUBSTANTIATING THINGS NOT SEEN

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." In other words, faith is the power to bring something, which we hope for and do not see, within us to be able to see and obtain it.

To use an illustration: suppose we have a beautiful picture here, and a blind man comes in, and we say to him: "Look at how beautiful this picture is." Of course, he will say, "I see nothing." So, does the picture not exist because he cannot see?

This is what we all have been doing. People say there is no God because they do not see Him. That is nonsense. It is not the fault of the picture. It is our fault because we do not have the eyesight, the ability to absorb what is outside of us and bring it in to be our experience so we can see the picture and enjoy the beauty of it. It has to become something within us instead of being outside—that is faith.

We can see from this that faith is the power of substantiating. There is a substance but it is outside of us; it is not our experience. It is not combined together in us as one. If that is the case, it is as if it does not exist. Faith has the power to substantiate what the Lord has done on Calvary's cross and make it our own. We see it within ourselves. Oftentimes, when we read the Scriptures, we see the letters, we see what Christ has done for us, but it does not seem to have any power or operation in our life. The word is word and you are you. What Christ has done is done, but in us, it is empty and it is nothing. One day, when the Holy Spirit enlightens us and suddenly our inner eyes are opened, we begin to see what is written. It is no longer letter but it becomes spirit and real to us. It operates in our life; it works. That is faith.

In the conflict that we are in, the only way to fight the battle is by faith and not by sight. We cannot do it. We do not have the wisdom nor the power to overcome our enemy. He is too tricky for us; he is too wise for us; he is too strong for us. Let us not try to fight him by ourselves. Thank God, our Lord Jesus has already overcome and given us His overcoming power—but only if we appropriate it and make it ours. It is by faith. Thus, we can see why this battle *has* to be fought by faith, which simply means we are not fighting it on our own but by Christ in us.

GOLIATH'S CHALLENGE TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Probably the best illustration we can find is in the Old Testament with Goliath, the giant, who challenged the

nation of Israel because he represented the nation of Philistia. He said, "I am the nation of Philistia, and I challenge you to bring any one out and fight with me. If you can kill me, the whole nation of Philistia will be yours. If I overcome you, then the whole country becomes ours." He challenged Israel day after day, and when Saul and the people saw him and heard him, they trembled in fear because Goliath was not only a giant, but he had been trained as a soldier from his youth.

Then David comes on the scene, a young boy who was a shepherd. He could not bear to see and hear the blasphemy of God's enemy against God's nation. He said, "I will go and fight against him." Goliath was fully armed with spear, sword, shield, and armor. David, a shepherd, said, "You come with spear and sword but I come in the name of the Lord." Of course, we all know the story. David used only his sling and one stone to hit the only spot in his head not covered by the helmet, because the two eyes have to be uncovered. It was between the two eyes that the stone hit him and Goliath fell. This is the way to fight the fight of faith.

We should never try to expose ourselves or rely on ourselves to resist and overcome the enemy because the more we try the more we will fail. We cannot do it. But thank God, there is One who has already overcome, and by faith, believing in Him, we are well able to overcome all our enemies. This is the secret of the spiritual battle we are in.

OUR STAND IN THE BATTLE IS ON THE GROUND OF CHRIST

We discover in Ephesians 6 that the apostle Paul is trying to tell us how to fight this battle we are in, and actually, it is more defensive than offensive. That is why in verses 10-11 he said: "For the rest brethren, be strong in the Lord and the might of His strength. Put on the panoply of

God that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the devil.”

In this spiritual battle or conflict, we find it is mainly defensive rather than offensive even though there is one offensive part. In a defensive battle, we have to stand on higher ground because that is the privileged ground.

Where do we stand? We stand on the ground of Christ. We never try to stand on any other ground. We cannot stand on other people’s ground or even on our own ground because these are lower grounds. The only high ground is to stand in Christ Jesus. That is why in verse 10, it says, “Be strong in the Lord and the might of His strength.” As long as we stand in Christ, the enemy is not able to dislocate us.

To put it another way, it simply means, “to abide in Christ.” We remember in John 15, the Lord Jesus said, “I am the vine and ye are the branches. I in you and you in Me.” This is our spiritual position. Then the Lord said, “Abide in me and I in you, and you shall bear fruit. You will be My true disciples. Abide in Me.” There is a right ground upon which we stand and it is Christ. We need to continue to stand in Christ. That is abiding, and it simply means to make your home there.

The tactic of the enemy is to try and remove us from that ground. As soon as he can remove us from the ground of Christ, then he can swallow us up. If we continue to stand on the ground of Christ, abiding in Christ, living in Christ, making our home there and not traveling out, then the enemy cannot dislocate us. He cannot overcome us because Christ is our victory.

THE ENEMY IS ALWAYS TRYING TO REMOVE US FROM THE GROUND OF CHRIST

Is it not true that in our experience the enemy is always trying to remove us from the ground of Christ? He will try to distract our attention—sometimes with other people,

situations, our friends, family members, and the world. He tries all these things to distract our attention and remove us from the ground of Christ. We are often fooled by the enemy and we begin to make people or situations our enemy. Other people or family members become our target. Let us be aware that as long as he is able to remove us from the ground of Christ, he is successful.

Sometimes when we are following the Lord, our friends try to show sympathy to us and tell us this way is too hard. Don't be too narrow or too strict. You do not need to do that. We need to see that the enemy is behind these friends who are trying to remove us from seeing Christ and look to them.

Throughout our Christian life we find this happening. Every one of us has had these experiences. We want to follow the Lord, but maybe our family thinks we are too narrow. Look at the other Christians; they can do this and do that. Why is it that you cannot? And how easily we are persuaded! We have to bear the cross and follow the Lord.

The enemy is trying every means to remove us from our stand in Christ. If we keep abiding in Him, then Christ is the victor. Therefore, in this battle we can see that standing is very important. That is the preparation for the fight.

THE COMPLETE ARMOR OF GOD

Then as we continue on in Ephesians 6 we read this: "Put on the panoply of God or the complete armor of God" (see v. 11). This word *panoply* (complete armor) is used only two times in the New Testament—Ephesians 6 and Luke 11:22. In Luke the Lord said, "How can you go into a strong man's house and take the things there unless we disarm him first?" As long as the enemy is fully armed, we have no way to get into his house because he is well able to protect it. The first thing we have to do is disarm the armory of the enemy. When the enemy is disarmed, then the whole house is wide open, and all the things in the house will become our trophies.

Do we really know that our enemy has already been disarmed? Probably in our own understanding, we think the enemy is fully armed. Thank God, our Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross has disarmed him, and he is now naked and fully exposed, but we have the privilege of being fully armed. What will be the use of armor if we do not put it on ourselves? If we leave it at home or do not put it on, it does not help us. In a sense, from the experiential side, *standing* means putting on Christ as our armor. We are to put on Christ—all the different aspects of Christ—and these will protect us from any and every assault of the enemy. It is essential for us to remember to put on the armor, put on Christ. That is the same thing as standing in Christ. As long as we put on Christ, even though the enemy will try every trick he has, he will fail.

Verse 13 says, "For this reason take to you the panoply of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having accomplished all things, to stand."

There is a double meaning here. If we put on Christ as our armor, then we are well-protected and able to withstand in the evil day. Today, we are living in the evil day, and only by putting on Christ will we be able to withstand all of the assaults, temptations, and distractions of the enemy.

Then we read: "...having accomplished all things, to stand" (v. 13b). This is positive. "Accomplish all things" simply means that we can carry through and put into execution the purpose of God to which we are called and thus, complete the task. That is why we say overcoming is twofold: it is not only to overcome the enemy, but also to execute the purpose of God and make it complete. By that, we are able to stand and withstand.

THE SEVENFOLD PARTS OF THE ARMOR

Girding Your Loins with Truth

We will mention some details of the armor of which there are seven. The first one is in verse 14: "Stand

therefore, having girt about your loins with truth.”

We are to gird our loins with truth and be ready for the fight. People in the olden days wore long garments, and whenever they went out to work, they had to gird their garments up with a girdle so it would not interfere with their work. In this spiritual battle we are in, the first of the armor is the girdle. In other words, this will prepare us for the fight as we girdle ourselves with truth.

Truth is not just something that Christ has accomplished on Calvary’s cross. It is; but truth is also something that Christ has accomplished on the cross that has become that which you walk by and walk in. In II John, the elder John said, “I am pleased to see that your children are walking in truth.” Whatever we know of Christ, we not only believe but also walk in it. If we really walk in the truth of what the Lord has revealed to us, and we are faithful to it, then we are girded and ready for the fight. Why is this so? Because if we are not believing the truth we cannot fight. And even if we believe but have not been obedient to the truth and walking in it, then there is falsehood there, and the enemy will find the loophole to attack us.

It is very, very important that in this spiritual battle, we have to begin with a conscience void of offense (see Acts 24:16). And this means that all we know of Christ and has been revealed to us in the Bible, we have been obedient to. If we are in that kind of situation, then we are in the position for the battle. If we have anything untrue in us, as the apostle Paul said, “We are like a ship and it will be shipwrecked” (see I Timothy 1:19). There is a hole there; water will come in, and we will sink, losing our faith. That is the preparation for the fight.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The second one mentioned is: “Having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (v. 14b). The breastplate is to protect the heart or the breast. In our heart, there is

righteousness. In other words, Christ is our righteousness; and not only is He our righteousness, but by the grace of God, we practice righteousness.

When the prodigal son came back, he was clothed by the father with the best robe. That is why we say Christ is our righteousness so that we can face our heavenly Father. That is the objective side. The subjective side is found in 1 John 2:29 which tells us that we need to practice righteousness. What the Holy Spirit has revealed to us—what is right in His sight—we have obeyed. That will protect our heart.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, we find that it is the breastplate of faith and love. In other words, if we have the breastplate of righteousness, then we will subjectively enter into faith and love. Having that righteousness, our faith will be strengthened and love will begin to flow out. The love of God will fill our hearts. That is the breastplate.

Shod the Feet with the Preparation of Peace

The third one: “Shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace” (v.15). In the battle, we need to have the right shoes so our feet will not slip, and we can stand firm. The shoes are the preparation or the readiness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To put it in another way, this means that we confess our Lord Jesus before the world. The Lord Jesus said, “If you confess Me before man, I will confess you before the Father. If you do not confess Me before man, then I will not confess you before the Father” (see Matthew 10:32-33). Peter tells us that we must always be ready, whenever we are asked to give the reason for our hope, to do it in humility and meekness (see I Peter 3:15). We need to be ready to confess the Lord Jesus at any time. Let us not be afraid and even deny Him. Let us always be ready to confess Him, and that will enable us to stand on firm ground.

The Shield of Faith

The fourth one: “Having taken the shield of faith with which ye will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one” (v. 16).

And the Helmet of Salvation

The fifth one: “Have also the helmet of salvation” (v. 17a). The enemy tries to throw fiery darts into our mind—sudden thoughts, accusations, false thinking, or doubting. When the enemy tries to inject these things into our mind, if we are not careful, we might think these are our own thoughts, and we are caught.

I remember one time during my Christian life, I really wanted to follow the Lord and obey Him in all things. I even went so far as to look in the school book of discipline to see if I had violated any of the rules. The enemy tried to throw everything into my mind, things that I did not want to think on. I accepted these things as though they were mine and they troubled me to the uttermost. I tried every means to cast these thoughts out but I could not do it; until finally, I was told: “You cannot forbid the bird to fly over your head, but you can forbid him to make his nest on your head.”

The enemy tries to attack our mind. How much I suffered because of that! Finally I realized that these thoughts were not mine nor were they of God; so why should I accept them? I had been deceived. The battle of the mind is a very real battle in our Christian life. Probably you have experienced it already or you are going to experience it. Thank God, we have the helmet of salvation.

The Sword of the Spirit

The sixth one: “And the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word” (v. 17b). This is a part of the armor that is both offensive and defensive. Thank God, we have the

word of God, but I am afraid we always make a mistake about this. We think of the word of God as our sword, and we try to wield the sword against ourselves and against other people. That is a big mistake. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit—not our sword. We are not experienced in using the word of God. When *we* use the word of God, we will cut people down and sometimes cut ourselves unnecessarily. It is the sword of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only One who knows how to wield that sword, and when He uses the word of God, it is living and operative and will penetrate, dividing the soul and spirit. Everything is made naked and laid bare before His eyes—all our thoughts and intents. Thank God we have the word of God in us and when the Holy Spirit uses the word, it will deliver us.

Of course, when the Holy Spirit is using the word against the enemy, the latter is routed. That is the reason why in the temptation of our Lord Jesus in the wilderness, every time the enemy tried to remove Him from the right ground of the Son of Man on to the ground of being the Son of God, he was defeated. When He was on earth, He came as the Son of Man. Even though He is the Son of God, He lived and acted as the son of Man, as one of us. The enemy tried to tempt him away from that ground as the Son of Man to be the Son of God, but the Lord Jesus used the word of God to defeat him every time. That is the way to use the word of God.

Prayer and Supplication

The seventh one: “With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (v. 18).

Prayer is also a weapon, a part of the armor. Prayer will protect us and clear the way for the will of God and defeat all the devices of the enemy.

To put it in one simple word: abide in Christ. This is the only way to apply the victory of Christ to our enemies. On the other hand, if we are doing that, it increases our spiritual life. It matures us, disciplines us, and conforms us to the image of Christ. May we be vessels, not only for God to use to defeat the enemy, but vessels to become His bride. We can see how wonderful the strategy of God is!

THE SECRET OF OVERCOMING

In Revelation it says that they overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives even unto death (see 12:11). That is the way of victory.

We need the blood of the Lord Jesus every moment of our lives. It not only cleanses us from every sin, it not only clears the way for God, but it also shuts the mouth of the accuser. We have the testimony: Jesus is Lord. It is a testimony not only that we believe, but we confess and speak it out. When we speak out that Jesus is Lord, the enemy will flee from us. We need to have that attitude. And we will not love our self-life even unto death.

This is the secret of victory. No wonder you find the apostle Paul in Romans 8 with that shout of victory. And when the marriage feast comes, there will be such a shout in heaven. But even today, we can shout the victory: Who can separate us from the love of Christ, who has loved us and given Himself for us? Let us take heart and press on towards the goal.

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord we want to praise and thank Thee because Thou art in charge over our lives. Thou art training us and building us up to be Thy church, Thy beloved bride. Thou art using us as Thy instrument to defeat the enemy and to finish up the work that Thou hast left the church to do. Oh, dear Lord, how Thou hast honored us with such a calling.

*We bow before Thee and worship Thee. We ask in Thy
name. Amen.*