

Consider the Overcomer

Revelation 14:1-5—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing upon mount Zion, and with him a hundred [and] forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written upon their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of the heaven as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard [was] as of harp-singers harping with their harps; and they sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one could learn that song save the hundred [and] forty-four thousand who were bought from the earth. These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins: these are they who follow the Lamb wheresoever it goes. These have been bought from men [as] first-fruits to God and to the Lamb: and in their mouths was no lie found; [for] they are blameless.

May we have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather in Thy presence, our hearts bow in worship. Thou hast been so good to us and hast kept us until now. Lord, we do gather in Thy name knowing that Thy presence is here with us. Dear Lord, wilt Thou open our understanding that when Thy words are given that they may fall into good ground bearing fruit unto Thee, a hundredfold to the glory of God. We thank Thee for having met with us through these days, and we thank Thee for being with us this morning. We commit this time into Thy hands, and we pray that Thou will take full charge over this time. We pray that Thy Holy Spirit will open Thy Word to our hearts. We pray that Thy Word will fall on good ground and bear eternal fruit for Thyself because Thou art worthy. Lord, we covet Thy presence with us. Speak, Thy servants heareth. We ask all in Thy precious name. Amen.

Why Does the Lord Not Return?

Thank God for bringing us to this day. He has been so gracious and merciful to us, and He has been speaking to us. He has been preparing us for His imminent return. Whenever we think about our Lord, we thank Him because He promised us that He is coming back to take us to be with Him. He promised this even in the first century, and He has promised it every century up to this present time. Is it because the Lord does not want to return? Of course not! He, as the Bridegroom, is most anxious to come for His bride. But unfortunately, His bride is not ready. The Lord cannot marry a little girl who is not grown up into maturity to be His life companion. He has to see that His bride is ready, grown up, full of His stature so that she will be able to be wedded to Him.

It is evident that it is not we who are waiting for the Lord; it is the Lord who is waiting for us. He promised His disciples while He was yet on earth, "I am coming to take you with Me. Where I am you shall be forever." He has kept this promise through all these centuries. He did not come during the first century because His bride was not ready. Now we are in the twenty-first century. Century after century our Lord has been waiting to return to claim His bride. But unfortunately, His bride is still not ready.

When we read the Scriptures, we realize that all the prophecies preceding the coming of the Lord have been fulfilled. What waits to be fulfilled are prophecies concerning His return and afterwards, not before. So do not look for any prophecies to be fulfilled. This is *the* time for us to wake up, knowing that the Lord can come at any moment.

If the Lord should come now, are you ready? Are you ready for Him? Or are you like the wicked servant who thought that the Lord would be delayed and he began to beat his fellow workmen? The Lord will come suddenly, and as we are together this morning, do you have the sense that the Lord may come today? Or are you thinking that the Lord will delay so you can still continue to live your own lives until you realize that it is too late? May we not deceive ourselves; the Lord is coming. Every prophecy that precedes His return has been fulfilled. All that needs to be fulfilled are prophecies that are concerned with His coming and afterwards.

Again, I say we are living at the most thrilling time because the Lord may come at any moment. But are you ready? Are we ready? If the Lord should come today, and this is absolutely possible, do not think we still have more time for ourselves. Do not deceive yourself. The Bible tells us our Lord Jesus may come at any moment. What if it were today? Are you ready? Are you prepared for Him, knowing that when He comes, one will be taken and one will be left? The one taken is the one who is ready for His return; but the one who is left is the one who still lives for himself and is not ready for the coming of the Lord. Which one are you? Are you the one who is ready at any moment? If the Lord should come now, thank God you are ready to be taken with Him. If you are not ready, if you are like the wicked servant thinking there is more time, and you begin to beat your fellow servants, woe to you. If the Lord should come today, you will be left.

The Ten Virgins

You remember the story of the ten virgins. The Bible tells us that virgins refer to those who have believed in the Lord Jesus because formerly we were all adulterers. We have sinned greatly against God, and we deserve nothing but

eternal death. But the Lord has saved us and has forgiven all our sins. He has made us virgins unto Himself.

We know that ten is the number of responsibility. So they all go out to meet the Lord, and they all had torches with oil in them. The five wise virgins had extra oil in their vessels because they believed that if the Lord should delay and the oil in their torch had been used up they could replenish it from the extra oil in their vessels. The foolish virgins also had oil in their torch, but in their vessels they had put other things and not oil. They thought there were more precious things to put in their vessels rather than oil. At midnight when the cry came and the Bridegroom appeared, they all went out to meet the Lord. In typology those ten virgins represent Christians, true believers throughout the centuries. Every century the saints are supposed to go out to meet the Lord, and we are at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What are we going to do? The same. We are to prepare ourselves to go out to meet our Lord. Thank God, we are living in the most thrilling time.

I always feel that we are living at such a wonderful time because our Lord's return is imminent. As we sit here peacefully, what are we thinking? Are we thinking that we have more time? Do we think that we can live for ourselves until we see certain prophecies being fulfilled and then wake up and get ourselves ready? If that is the case then we are fooled because all the prophecies preceding the coming of the Lord have been fulfilled. There are yet prophecies to be fulfilled, but all these prophecies are concerned with His coming and afterwards, not before. So let us wake up, realizing that we are living in a very thrilling time. The Lord may come at any moment in our time. Should the Lord come today, are we ready? Are we prepared to meet Him face to face and not be ashamed? This is the question before each and every one of us.

So ask yourself, if the Lord should come today, am I ready? Are you ready to come before Him? Or do you still think that there is time and you can continue to live for yourself? Again, I will say we are living in a very thrilling time. This is the time when the Lord may come at any moment. Any moment means that from now on anything can happen. But are you ready? Are we ready? Are we prepared to meet the Lord and be taken into His kingdom? Or will we be like the foolish virgins who did not have extra oil in their vessel because they considered other things more precious to them than extra oil. But when the Lord delayed, at midnight the cry came: "The Lord has come!" When they got up, they discovered that their torch had died and they had no extra oil to rekindle their torches to go and meet the Lord, so they went away to buy oil. I often wonder whether they

actually bought more oil; I do not think so. However, when they came back, the door was closed, and they were cast into outer darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth which means repentance.

The Call for Overcomers

It is far better if we repent today than to wait for that time when we will be cast out and then repent. It will be a little too late. My burden is this: are we ready for the Lord's return? The Lord may come today, maybe tomorrow, or maybe some time later; we do not know. It is not because the Lord does not want to return. Is there any bridegroom who is not anxious to meet his bride? Are we ready for Him?

When we read the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we find that the theme is very clear. The Lord is calling for overcomers.

While our Lord was on earth, He overcame. He cast out the demons and made a public show of them. He led captive all those who had belonged to the demons. He is the conqueror. And now He calls those who believe in Him to follow Him and be overcomers. So in the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, you will find the thought of overcomers is throughout that book. This is the last message God will give to His people.

Have we heard this last message? Have we overcome as He has overcome? Sometimes you may wonder why it is that we are living in such a miserable world, a difficult world, a hard world. Why is it that the Lord did not rapture us as soon as we are saved, then we would rejoice forever and ever? But the Lord knows better. He knows there is much in us that needs to be dealt with. Our self-centeredness and self-interest need to be dealt with. We need to be delivered from ourselves and be filled with Christ Jesus.

May I ask you a question: how is your life today? Do you live for Christ? Or do you live for yourselves? Are you filled with Christ? Or are you filled with the things of this world thinking that the Lord will delay? As the Bible says, when the wicked servant began to beat his fellow believers, the Lord suddenly returned. Oh brothers and sisters, this is the time that we need to wake up.

So when you read the last book of the Bible, you find that the message throughout the book is to overcome, to be overcomers. Why? Because our Lord is *the* overcomer. He overcame while He was on earth. He overcame Satan and all that was satanic. He brought them into public shame and made a public show of them. Our Lord is the Victor of Calvary, and because of this, He expects all those who follow Him to be overcomers.

So the question today is: Are you an overcomer? Are you overcoming your self? Are you overcoming the self-life? Are you overcoming the work of the enemy in your life? Are you one who is totally dedicated to the Lord and ready to receive Him at His coming? This is urgent. It is not something casual. You have to think deeply about it. Are you ready for His return? Are you an overcomer as our Lord Jesus overcame? Are you overcoming the self-life in you? Are you overcoming the work of the enemy in your soul? Have you really dedicated yourself completely to the Lord and are following the Lord so that you are ready for His return?

This is what the book of Revelation shows us. If you read Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the message is very clear. It is the call for overcomers. This is the call today. In Revelation 2 and 3 we find the seven churches in Asia during the first century, and what was their call? To every church, the call is to overcome. "He that overcomes."

Why is it that the Lord has not yet come? I believe you must have asked this question. The answer is not in the Lord; the answer is in us. Do you think the Bridegroom delays His return because He is not anxious to return? No. Even in the first century, He promised that He would return. But why is it that we are now in the twenty-first century and the Lord has not yet come? I think it is very clear. The cause is not in Him; it is in us because we are not ready.

The Call to the Seven Churches—He that Overcomes

In the whole book of Revelation, the message is to overcome. For instance, chapters 2 and 3 tell us of the seven churches in Asia towards the end of the first century. And to every church, whether the church is faithful or whether it is a failure, at the end is the call to overcome. The Lord expects us to be overcomers. Do not blame your environment. You may think if you live in a better environment like the church in Philadelphia it would be easier for you to be an overcomer, but the call was the same as the other churches. And even in a church like the one in Laodicea, you should be an overcomer.

So the call today is the call to overcome. What does it mean to overcome? It is to overcome yourself, to overcome the self-life in you, to overcome all the works of the enemy in your self-life. If you are willing to lay down your self, offer yourself completely to the Lord and allow Him to be Lord and follow Him faithfully, then you will be an overcomer. When you read through the book of Revelation, you will find from the beginning to the end there is the call to overcome.

For instance, in chapters 2 and 3, which refer to the seven churches in Asia towards the end of the first century, there were not only good churches but also bad ones. Nevertheless, whatever the condition of the church, the call to overcome was the same. For those who overcome they will inherit the kingdom that is to come; but those who are overcome will be cast into outer darkness.

I know that everyone is interested in knowing what the outer darkness is. Again I will say that from all the books I have read, there is only one book that told us what the outer darkness might be. But let us not speculate; let us be real.

The Overcomers are Rewarded with the Kingdom

In chapters 2 and 3, towards the end of the first century, to every church whether it is faithful like Philadelphia or it is unfaithful like Laodicea, the call is the same. He that overcomes He will be rewarded with the kingdom. All the promises and rewards of the overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3 are referring to the kingdom age. During the kingdom age, those who overcome will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

A thousand years is a long time. Today, no one lives a thousand years. But to live a thousand years reigning with Christ during the millennium time is such a reward, such a glory! Again I want to emphasize that the Lord may come today. What if He should come this afternoon? Where will we be? If we are to meet in the afternoon, who will be there? Hopefully there will be none because we all will have been taken and will share the glory of the kingdom during that millennium time. But woe to those five foolish virgins who did not prepare extra oil. In other words, they are saved but barely saved. When the Lord delayed, their oil was gone and their torches were dead. They could not enter into the kingdom, and they were cast into outer darkness.

The Outer Darkness

Again I want to say that everyone seems to be interested in outer darkness as if we are interested in the negative more than the positive. Isn't that strange? But in outer darkness, there is gnashing of teeth which means repentance. If we do not repent today, then we will have to repent during the millennium time; but remember, it is a thousand years.

So in Revelation 2 and 3, we have the call to overcome. Whether you are with a good church, as it were, or you are with a bad church, the call is the same—to be an overcomer. Wherever the Lord puts you, He wants you to be faithful to Him. Do not look for a better environment because our environment is determined by the Lord. He allows us to pass through different situations because He knows what He is doing. He wants you to be completed. Whom He has

predestined, He has called; whom He has called, He has justified; whom He has justified, He will glorify. The Lord's thoughts toward us are precious. He who has saved us will save us to the uttermost; He will not save us half-way. However, if we do not repent today, during the millennial age we will have to repent because God's will is that we be perfect as He is perfect.

In the second part of Revelation 7, we find a countless number of people standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Mount Zion here does not refer to the Zion on earth where David set up His kingdom, but it refers to the heavenly Zion where God shall establish His kingdom. They were clothed with white clothing which refers to Christ our righteousness. They have palm trees in their hands which represent victory. They were proclaiming the victory of the Lord.

Then in chapter 14, there is also a countless number of people, so many you cannot count them. They all have the mark of God and of the Lamb on their foreheads. In other words they were out and out Christians, not hidden Christians. These are the overcomers through the ages. Thank God, they are countless. Even though in looking at the overcomers they seem to be few, the minority, but throughout the centuries, in every century, God will have His overcomers.

The Man Child

In Revelation 12 there is the man child who is to be born. As we think of the age we are in, this is our time. Even though the church has failed, God will raise up overcomers in the church like the man child who is to be born. Of course there are different interpretations of Revelation 12. Some think that the child represents our Lord Jesus; but that cannot be because when the man child is born, he will immediately be taken to the third heaven. However, when our Lord Jesus was born on earth, He lived thirty-three and a half years. Therefore, this man child represents the overcomers toward the end of this age. In other words, this man child represents you and me. We are supposed to be that man child.

The target of God's enemy is no longer towards the church because the church as a whole has failed. But thank God, through all of the troubles and turmoil in the church, she is bearing a man child. Thus in chapter 12 of Revelation we find that Satan's attention is not towards the woman which represents the church in the last age. The church is already in his hand; he does not care about it. But his whole attention is towards the man child to be born because he knows when the man child is born, that will be his end. This man child represents the overcomers at the coming of the Lord, and we are in that time.

Today we are expecting the rapture. Even though we have passed through deep troubles, out of them we have learned our lessons. By the grace of God, we try to be faithful, obey the Holy Spirit, cooperate with Him, and allow Him to work deeply in our lives that we may be totally His. Are we living in such a way? If so there is no fear. We are waiting to be raptured at any moment. Who knows? We are here this morning, but where will we be this afternoon? Nobody knows; only God knows. If the time is right, the rapture will happen at any moment. How good it will be if in the afternoon this auditorium will be empty! None will be left behind; everyone will be raptured.

The rapture means that the overcomers will go through the air to the third heaven. The air today is where the enemy of God has his headquarters. And to be able to get through his headquarters to the third heaven means victory. It means in their lives they have overcome the enemy which is a picture of us today. Are we within the man child? Have we overcome the enemy? Are we able to get through his territory and up to the third heaven to meet the Lord and lead Him back to this earth? What a privilege this will be! Do you admire it? Do you want it? Do you have a part in it? I suppose you do. If that is the case, how can we be in that man child today? We have to consecrate ourselves totally to Christ and allow Him to work in our lives, deal with our soul-life, and deal with all the works of the enemy in our lives until Christ is fully formed in us, and thus we will be in the man child.

The Secret of the Overcomers

In Revelation 12, it tells us the secret of their victory. It says they overcame the enemy by the blood of the Lamb. In other words, they know the preciousness of the blood of the Lamb. Not only have we been saved by the blood of the Lamb, we need to be saved continually by the blood of the Lamb.

I suppose you must have heard this story. Martin Luther, the Reformer, who was greatly used by God, had a dream one day. He saw Satan coming to him bringing a scroll and the name of the book was an account of the sins of Martin Luther. This book was filled with words inside and out. So Satan said to Martin Luther, "Look at this. This is what you are. Dare you to be a reformer!" Thank God, Martin Luther knew the Lord. He took up a red pencil and wrote upon it: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all my sins." And Satan disappeared. May this be our testimony!

Oh, I cannot make it more urgent! We are living at this crucial time. If the Lord should come today, you will either be taken or you will be left. But it all depends

on whether today you are willing to give yourself completely to the Lord and allow the Lord to work out His full salvation in you.

In Revelation 12:11 it says, "They have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb." We need the blood of the Lamb every moment of our life. Do not think because you have believed in the blood of the Lamb and had your sins forgiven, therefore this is something of the past. No! We need the blood of the Lamb every moment of our life.

They have overcome Satan because of the word of their testimony. They had a testimony to give, and they say the word; it was not something hidden. And when they say the word, there is power in it because they live it in their lives.

They love not their soul-life even unto death. They are willing to give up their soul-life unto the Lord to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

These will be the overcomers at this hour. The Lord is coming soon. If He should come this afternoon, are you ready?

The Lamb Standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000

In chapter 14, you find the 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. This is not the Mount Zion on earth where the throne of David is. This is the Mount Zion in heaven where Christ is enthroned, and there you find the 144,000 standing with the Lord on that mountain.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have a strange teaching. They say that the number 144,000 has been fulfilled. So if you become a Jehovah Witness today you are a second class citizen. Isn't that absurd?

I believe the 144,000 is not a complete number because it cannot be that there will only be 144,000 overcomers throughout the age. The 144,000 is the multiple of twelve, and twelve is a perfect number. In other words, they have been perfected by the Lord.

These 144,000 have the name of the Father and the Lord's name written upon their foreheads. If anything is on your forehead, it is visible to everybody. Today we find many Christians trying to hide their faith; but here you find these overcomers openly confess the Lord Jesus. They may suffer for it, and yet they are faithful to the Lord. They have the name of the Father and the name of the Lord upon their foreheads. In other words, everybody can see that they are the Lord's. This is their public testimony.

Then it says, "I heard a voice out of heaven as the sound of many waters and it was like the voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard was of harp singers harping with their harps. We know what harping is; it is music from the soul. It is not something outward; it is from within. These overcomers during their

life time have learned a new song, a song that only they could have learned. And they learned it in their lives by the work of the Holy Spirit. They sang a new song.

In verse 4 it says, "These are they who have not been defiled by women, for they are virgins." What is meant here is they are virgins in the sight of God because they have dedicated themselves totally to the Lord.

Then it says, "These are they who follow the Lamb whersoever it goes." That is their life.

"These have been bought from men as fruit-fruits to God and to the Lamb." They are the first fruits to God.

"And in their mouths was no lie found." They are honest in the Lord.

It concludes with "they are blameless." Blameless by the grace of God in the sight of God.

So these are the overcomers of the ages. It is our hope that every one of us here will be among the rank. None will be excepted. This is our prayer before the Lord.

May I finally emphasize: the Lord is coming, are you ready? If you are ready like those of the 144,000, then when He should come then you will be raptured to the third heaven and be with Him and even be used by Him to bring the Lord back to this earth to begin the millennial kingdom. If you are not in the rank, how sad it will be!

Saved to the Uttermost

But thank God, no matter what we are, He who has saved us will save us to the uttermost. So in Romans 8, we are told: "Whom He has known, He has called, whom He has called, He has justified, whom He has justified, He has glorified." In other words, if the Lord's mercy has come upon you, He will not leave you until that work is done. We thank God that we who are here this morning, I believe the Lord has already laid His hand upon us. He has already saved us, and He will save us to the uttermost. So eventually we will all be kings with the Lord in His eternal kingdom. But today is the test. Are we ready? Are we prepared to be raptured? Again I want to emphasize that it may happen at any time. May the Lord have mercy upon all of us that if He should return and we will all be raptured, the place will be empty to the glory of God! This is the burden of our heart. May the Lord have mercy upon each and every one of us!

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for Thou hast saved us and will save us to the uttermost. Sometimes we are complacent, but Thou art always faithful. In spite of all our failures Thou wilt continue to work in our lives, if not today, then

during the kingdom age until all of us as the Bible says shall be kings reigning with Christ for the glory of God. Oh dear Lord, how we thank Thee for all the mercy and grace that Thou hast bestowed upon us. As we have gathered here this morning, we want to give Thee all the glory. In Thy precious name. Amen.