

## "Overcome"

Life presents many challenges to our Christian lives. Can we overcome them? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring the challenge and the rewards to overcoming life's struggles.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The word of God opens a mirror so that we can see ourselves as we truly are. It warns us of dangers, gives us promises, rebukes our weaknesses, and strengthens our faith. The inspired word of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. It gives us everything we need to know spiritually how to live godly lives and how to have eternal life. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

In the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus addresses the seven churches of Asia. Some of these congregations were holding fast and doing well, while others were in spiritual danger. Some of these congregations had in the same assembly people who held fast to the Lord worshiping with others who were deep in sin. Some were facing harsh persecution, while others were challenged by evil or indifference. This sounds similar to churches in our own day. Some are healthy, some are dead, some are holding to the truth, and some are in great error.

The Lord speaks to these seven churches with authority. He is indeed Lord, and every church is accountable to Him. When churches fail to please Him, He calls them to wake up and remember, remember what the Lord did for them on the cross and how He saved them. Some churches simply need to repent of their sin and lawless ways. Some need to start loving the Lord again, because they have ceased to love or need Him. Whatever challenge they face, they could either fall away, losing their place as a church; or they could overcome the challenge and be the kind of congregation that God desires. The Lord knocked at the door of the people in Laodicea, and He will knock at our door. Will we let Him in or turn Him away? My friend, let Him in!

We offer this study free on overcoming. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

We'll now worship in song, read from Revelation 2, verses 1 to 6, and explore the challenge and the rewards to those who overcome.

Our reading today comes from the book of Revelation, chapter 2 verses 1 through 6. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and the perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.'" This is a reading from God's Holy Word.

Let's pray. "Oh Father help us to love You, to serve You, and to stay close to You, and to live with You always in love and in service. In Jesus name, Amen."

The book of Revelation makes promises seven times to those who overcome in chapters 2 and 3. These seven churches differ in their attitudes, their devotion, and their behavior. Churches are made up of people. And each person addressed was assembled with one of these seven congregations. And each church member faces a challenge to remain faithful to the Lord. Now congregations today differ in many ways, and some today are very much like some of these seven churches. We may face different challenges, but the challenge to overcome and to be what God would have us to be remains with us all. Some have doctrinal challenges, some face social challenges, some have moral challenges, some have lost their first love, and some simply have stopped caring. You aren't the first one to face these challenges, and you can overcome just as many of them did.

The Lord Jesus told the church at Ephesus, "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they're not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." Though they were doctrinally strong and persevered in their faith, they had lost the strong love they had in earlier days. Many Christians today face this same challenge to keep their love for God strong and alive. They may have taken their eyes off of the love found in Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

They needed to remember and to repent. The Lord said in Revelation 2:5, "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." Yes, a loss of love means this whole church can lose its place with God. Jesus gave them hope and an opportunity to change. The Lord said in verse seven, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

The Lord prepared the church at Smyrna for the tribulation that would come upon them. The city of Smyrna was loyal to Rome and its emperor. The church was poor in its possessions but rich with God. They faced slander and imprisonment from their enemies, both the Jews and the Romans. The Lord said, "Do not fear what you're about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2 verses 9 to 10). He promises, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." Now the second death means that one will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20 verse 14). But the one who stays faithful need not fear the lake of fire. He will have a crown of life and live eternally with the Lord.

The Lord saw a mixed group at Pergamum, the place where Satan's throne is. Some held fast to their faith and didn't deny their faith in the Lord. He even mentions Antipas, who died bearing witness to his faith. But the Lord Jesus had a few things against the church at Pergamum, because they allowed someone to teach them they could eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. Some also held the false views of the Nicolaitans, who like Balaam may have felt they could compromise with the pagans in public and could be sexually free. Jesus told them to repent or He would come against them with the sword of His mouth. The challenge to remain free from sin and from the teaching of the world is great even in our day. Jesus promised, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it" (Revelation 2 verse 17). God would give them the manna they needed. The white stone probably meant God regarded them as acquitted of sin.

The Lord Jesus knew the works of the church at Thyatira, just as He knows our works today. The Lord knew Thyatira's works, their love, their faith, their service, and their patient endurance. Unlike

Ephesus, their latter works exceeded their first. But the Lord had much against them, because they tolerated Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess. She taught and seduced the servants of God to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. The Lord gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. To hear some speak today, there's no such thing as sexual immorality; but the Lord demands that we live holy lives.

The Lord said He would punish those who commit adultery with great tribulation. Unless they repent, He will strike her children, so that all the churches will know that He is the One who searches the mind and heart and will give to each one what his works deserve. Others at Thyatira did not hold to her teaching, what some call the deep things of Satan. And He told them to hold fast what you have until I come. And He promised, "And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26 to 28). Notice these promises are to the person who remains faithful to the end.

The Lord Jesus knew about Sardis. Sardis had the reputation of being alive, but they were dead. They needed to wake up and to strengthen what remains and is about to die. I fear many congregations today are much like Sardis. The Lord had not found their works complete in the sight of God. He told them to remember what you received and heard; keep it and repent. If they would not wake up, Jesus said He would come against them like a thief in the night. In spite of this, a few people had not soiled their garments, and they will walk with the Lord in white, for they are worthy. Jesus promised, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Revelation 3 and verse 6).

The Lord also knew the works of the church at Philadelphia. And He set before them an open door, which no one could shut. They had little power but had kept His word and had not denied His name. He promised to make the synagogue of Satan bow down before your feet. And they will learn that the Lord Jesus loved the church at Philadelphia. Because of their love and faith, the Lord promised to keep them from the hour of trial. And He urged them to hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize their crown. He promised, that "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name" (Revelation 3 verse 12). Those who belong to the Lord are loved and live with Him forever.

The Lord also knew about the lukewarm church at Laodicea. They weren't hot or cold but had become indifferent to God. They didn't care; they could take up a cross or leave it. And so offensive were they to the Lord that the Lord wanted to spit them out of His mouth. They were saying, "Well, I'm rich, I've prospered, and I need nothing." You know, people today sometimes feel that they have everything they need and really don't need God. The church then didn't realize that they were in God's sight "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." People today are just as wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked; but they don't know it. He counseled the church at Laodicea to buy gold refined by fire from Him, so they could really be rich in the things of God. To buy white garments from Him, so that they won't be ashamed of their spiritual nakedness. Buy salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see spiritually. While they had physical blessings, they lacked a warm, loving relationship with the

Lord. You may not be close to the Lord either. My friend, but we all need the Lord; and nothing else, nothing else will do.

The Lord Jesus said, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (And then He said to those at Laodicea) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anybody hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3 verses 19 to 20). Now, Jesus loves and wants fellowship even with those who don't need Him. And friend, He wants fellowship with you. He promised, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (verse 21).

Friend, are you overcoming the challenges of your faith or failing to overcome? Are you remembering and holding fast to the Lord's teaching, or are you casting aside His words to do your own thing? Do you love Him deeply, or have you left your first love? Are you tolerating sinful things, or do you need to repent of the sinful ways so prevalent that's in our world? Are you alive or are you dead spiritually?

Many people who were once faithful and practicing Christians have become indifferent to the Lord and to His church. They live according to their own rules and do as they please. They've forgotten the cross and they forgotten what the Lord did for them. And the Lord is not blind or naive. He knows and will reward or punish each person according to what he or she deserves. You may tolerate evil beliefs or sinful ways, but the Lord won't tolerate them. He will give us time to repent of our lawless ways; but when people refuse to repent, there comes a time when His patience ends. Sin, friend, will harden your heart and cause you to fall away in unbelief. And in the end you will be lost.

The Lord loves those who love Him and keep His commandments. He seeks to make a home in our lives. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:23 to 24, that "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." The Lord wants to love you and for you to love Him. And that's why He's knocking at your door, hoping you will open the door. He won't barge in; you must open it for Him. Now no matter what your heart or life has been in the past, you can repent and start opening the door of your mind and your heart and let the Lord come in.

Can you hear the Lord knocking at your door? Can you hear His words calling you? Will you open the door or leave it closed? Will you turn to Him?

Let's pray together. "Oh Father we pray that we may open our hearts, and open our minds, to Your Word and to Your love and grace. Help us Heavenly Father to repent of the things that we have done that are wrong. And to turn to righteousness, to hunger for it and to love You and to serve You with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength. This is our prayer in the Name of Jesus. Amen."

To each of the seven churches of Asia, the Lord Jesus said, "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Listening to what the Spirit says in the word of God is still just as important today as it was in the first century. The Spirit didn't speak these words to the people of the world, but to people who were members of the Lord's church. They knew about the grace and love of the cross; and they knew of the second coming and Judgment Day. They needed reminding, however, that the Lord knew what was going on in their lives.

The words "wake up" appear twice in this chapter, "remember" appears twice, "faithful" appears three times, "hold fast" appears three times, and "repent" appears eight times. The Lord Jesus was trying to get the churches to wake up, to remember, to repent, to be faithful and to hold fast to Him. What the Lord Jesus said to these seven churches is just what we too need to hear as well. As a

Christian, you may need to repent, confess your sins, and pray God to forgive you. 1 John 1 verse 9 says, that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now by "Christian," I mean one who has obeyed the gospel according to the teaching of the Scripture. To obey the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of evil and turn to the Lord, confess Jesus as the Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And when you're baptized, God washes away your sins and gives you newness of life (Roman 6, verses 3 to 7, and Acts 22 verse 16).

We hope that today's study about overcoming challenges, that it will wake you up and that you'll consider your accountability to the Lord. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Be sure to like the programs you watch; that'll help us spread the program. We also offer Bible Correspondence courses. And we want to help you to draw close to God.

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