

The Overcoming Church

Rev 12:10-11

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

I. Introduction

1. In the last days, God intends His church is to have a significant part in His end-time plan. The period we are in, and have been in since the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, is often referred to as the dispensation of grace, or the church age.
2. In this time, we are called to be God's harvesters with the responsibility of going into the field and finding and bringing in His lost and hidden treasures, advancing the Kingdom of God in our world, and spreading the influence of His Word and His righteousness.
3. If someone were to ask the church, "What are you doing?" Our response should parallel the 12-year-old Jesus' response to Mary:
Luke 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?
4. We are an overcoming church and our business is to be about our Father's business.

II. The restraining power of the church

1. But I believe that soon, very likely in the lifetime of some living today, there will be a transition from the church age into the tribulation period with the antichrist rising up with global power.
2. As described by the Book of Revelation and the prophets, the calamities of the tribulation period not only include judgments and wrath of God poured out on those who rejected Him and His salvation, but will include the unchaining of extreme evil and demonic powers onto the earth.
3. But during that time of global tribulation, while evil is totally rampant, the church is pictured in heaven with Jesus, having been caught up to be with the Lord prior to the onset of the tribulation.
4. So in God's plan, while the church is on earth, it serves as the restrainer of that full force of evil power, keeping it held back, reserved unto God's time for the conclusion of man's rule over the earth.

2 Thess 2:3-8

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

*6 And now ye know what **withholdeth** [something is holding back the man of sin from being revealed] that he might be revealed in his time.*

*7 For the **mystery of iniquity** doth already work [a hidden power of lawlessness]: only he*

*who now letteth [restrains] will let [restrain], until he be taken out of the way [caught up].
8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

5. So what does it mean to be about our Father's business? How can we be a force to restrain evil in our day?
6. What more can we do to restrain more of the evil of our day?
7. What kind of influence should we be having in our world right now?
8. Is there not a lot of evil in our world that we are beholding with our eyes? Yes there is, and we think it is bad now. But wait until the church, the restrainer is taken out of the way. The lawlessness of that day will be magnified after the influence of the church is taken out.

III. The church overcomes

A. Jesus' example

1. To get an idea of what God intended the church to be doing, and especially as the last days of the church approached, we can look at the focus Jesus had as He ministered, as an example.

Luke 5:31-32

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

2. And we can be most thankful for that focus.
3. He had that focus when the mother of a demon-possessed girl brought her request to Jesus, she asked Him to deliver her daughter from the torments of the devil. After helping the mother get on the right path, Jesus spoke the word and the devil departed and that evil control over the girl ended.
4. He had that focus when another man possessed of a legion of devils came and fell at the feet of Jesus. The demons begged Jesus not to torment them, but Jesus commanded them to depart from the man and they did.

B. The early church

1. And the early church also picked up that same focus:

Acts 5:14-16

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) [the church was reaching the lost with the gospel message]

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

*16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and **they were healed every one.***

2. Reaching to the lost, reaching to the sick, reaching to those vexed or troubled by unclean spirits, and setting them free.

3. Some years later, we see the church continued with that same focus. Paul ran into a demon possessed woman who was living as a slave to a man who used her for financial gain. Paul rebuked the devil and it fled from the woman and the woman received her right mind.
 4. And another example of that same focus. Paul preached in the city of Ephesus, and many that had formerly been involved in black magic, were set free from that evil by the Holy Ghost.
 5. Here we see that they destroyed all their books of magic and curious arts in a bonfire of celebration for their deliverance.
Acts 19:18-20
18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.
19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.
20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.
 6. The piece of money in question here is the silver drachma, which was the equivalent of a day's wage. So to estimate the economic value of these evil items they destroyed, take your day's wage times 50,000 and you see what kind of money we're talking about.
 7. And to them, money had no value when compared to the value of the delivering power of the Holy Ghost. Because that was the focus of the early church.
 8. And if people receiving the Holy Ghost has that kind of impact of the world, there is no counting possible of the kind of evil that has been uprooted and ended through the influence of the church.
- C. Our generation
1. So let us move beyond the pages of the Bible into our generation, and ask, "What about the people who have come out of darkness into His marvelous light?" What is the church in our day doing to keep that same focus?
 2. There have been multitudes, who, by the influence of the church, once were under bondage to drug addiction, alcoholism, raging anger, gross sexual perversions, hatred, murderous, thieving, and abusing ways, but now are living for God, loving God, and are reaching, caring, and serving others.
 3. Some even ministering to and caring for those they previously abused.
 4. Do you want to see our world change? Do you want to end the influence of evil on our society?
 5. Let the church be the church, the overcoming church that Jesus had in mind.
 6. We can even ask the big questions of the day. Do you want to see healing for a pandemic? Do you want to see racial differences brought to a peaceful brotherhood?
 7. The God of miracles has presented in the scriptures and in our history and in our present generation, that faith still works in healing sickness and racial tensions.
- D. Overcoming the pandemic.
1. While it is still early, I have heard testimonies of people delivered from the grave sickness of COVID-19.

2. I watched my wife very rapidly fall into a condition where here very breath was taken away from her to the point she quit breathing. But God orchestrated the crossing of a railroad crossing not far from the hospital that jerked her to life again.
3. Many of you watched her video testimony the day after she came home from the hospital, how she was still struggling even to speak.
4. But then a few short days later, I watched recovery turnaround immediately following the intercessory prayer meeting that we called against the pandemic.
5. That prayer represented a turnaround for her health condition.
6. Sis. James had been terribly sick for weeks, very possibly from COVID. And that sickness ended the night of our intercessory prayer meeting.
7. Yes, Jesus can deliver from the effects of a worldwide plague.

James 5:15-16

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

8. And the overcoming church must continue praying the prayer of faith!
- E. Jesus overcame racial tension
1. Concerning racial tensions, they were just as real in Jesus' day as in our day.
 2. There existed a strong tension between Jews and Samaritans, with little tolerance for the other present in each group. Gentiles were considered defiled and unclean for Jews to associate with.
 3. And of the Gentiles, the Romans were perhaps the most despised because they were the military conquering force that had stripped them of independence as a people.
 4. Yet Jesus, being a Jew, told a parable about a good Samaritan, and a neglectful Jewish priest and temple worker.
 5. Jesus identified only two people who had the level of faith that He called, "great faith." And guess what, both of them were Gentiles, and one of them was a Roman centurion.
 6. He even added this remark about the centurion's faith:
*Matt 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, **no, not in Israel.***
 7. It is likely Jesus was speaking of His own, Jewish people.

F. Paul overcame racial tensions

1. Paul dealt with a racial partition that had previously divided the Jews and Gentiles, but that Jesus took that partition down with His blood:

Eph 2:13-22

*13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off [he is writing to a Gentile church] are made nigh **by the blood of Christ.***

*14 For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition between us;***

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body **by the cross**, having **slain the enmity** thereby: [by Jesus' blood and His cross He put to death the hostility between races]

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off [Gentiles], and to them that were nigh [Jews].

18 For through him **we both** have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens with the saints**, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are **builded together** for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

2. The blood of Jesus and the cross of Jesus, tore down the wall of cultural separation between them, and made ONE church, fellowcitizens builded together.
3. If you read of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost that rebirthed the Pentecostal movement in the early 1900s, you will find that it was an African American holiness preacher by the name of William Seymour who led the church in Los Angeles on Azusa Street.
4. That occurred within two generations following the U.S. Civil War. And when the Holy Ghost was poured out on those people in Los Angeles, and then spread to many other cities, that pioneer church was made of all races coming together during a very troubled period of racial tensions.
5. And still today, that middle wall of partition that Jesus' blood and Jesus' cross tore down, continues to unite people of all cultures and races.
Col 3:11-15
11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but **Christ is all, and in all.**
6. How is it that a Holy Ghost-filled church is to deal with cross-cultural relations?
Col 3:12-15
12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of **mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;**
13 **Forbearing** one another, and **forgiving** one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
14 And above all these things put on **charity**, which is the bond of **perfectness.**
15 And let the **peace** of God **rule** in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
7. The church is to have an impact on the world because the church still preaches the Word of God that breaks the tension in human relations, and tears down strong holds that the devil holds people bound with.
8. Drugs, alcohol, murder, or racism, the Holy Ghost is a healer of bodies and minds.
9. I am particularly thankful that what Jesus accomplished gave the church power to enforce the spiritual laws that keep us from being dominated by the power of the devil.
- G. Devil overcoming power

1. Paul told the church of Ephesus the blood of God had purchased the church. That was a currency with great purchasing power.

Acts 20:27-28

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

*28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed **the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.***

2. God purchased the church with His blood on His cross.
3. In other words, like that song we used to sing says, “the hold satan had on me, he ain’t got no more.”
4. And those who have been purchased by the blood of God, have overcoming power over the devil. That is why the church must be the church!
Rev 12:10-11
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

H. Resurrection power

1. In Romans 8, we read that the Holy Ghost is the resurrection power that will raise all those who have the Spirit dwelling inside of them.
Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

IV. Conclusion

1. So when the church is caught away, the Holy Ghost that dwelled in men caught them up into the clouds, so the manifest presence of God that lived in people’s body, will no longer be manifest on the earth in humans.
2. So imagine the spiritual dynamic shift that will occur one minute after the rapture.
3. So what kind of impact are we having as a church on our world now that the Holy Ghost and His Word are working through us?
4. On the Day of Pentecost, the first day of the church, 3,000 souls were filled with the Holy Ghost. That meant those 3000 people who had just the previous day been headed for hell with the devil, now had a new destiny that did not involve bondage by the devil, but a glorious life with God.
5. And not only that, each of those 3,000 became “Christians,” or in other words, “little Jesuses” roamed the earth spreading the influence of the kingdom of God and literally changed the world.
6. The kind of church God wants us to be is the kind that impacts our world for His kingdom, and thwarts the control of the devil over the lives of people.