

## Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

### Embracing Uncompromising Commitment - Chapter 4

1. Read Revelation 2:12-17. Jesus is writing to the church at Pergamum. Jesus identifies Himself as *“the one who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”* What is symbolized this double-edged sword? It is the Word of God, the Bible.
2. Back in Revelation 1:16, John describes Jesus the same way. *“In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”* Evans says that the sword was a symbol of authority during Roman occupation. The Romans would have ruled this region with a sword.
3. Romans 13:4 says, *“For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”* Remember in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* At that time, along with the authority comes the sword. For Jesus, the sword was the Word of God. Evans asks, *“Do you fear the power of the man and his sword? Or do you fear the power of Jesus and His Word?”*
4. The writer of Hebrews (4:12) describes it. *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* Tony Evans says that it is double-edged because it can be a blessing or for judgment, for building up or tearing down.

David Guzik says, *“God’s Word diagnoses the condition of man with a surgeon’s precision. It lays open the heart and accurately discerns spiritual health.”*

5. The Church of Pergamum was in a bad location. Jesus writes that this church was *“where Satan has his throne”*. It was located in the heart of satanic worship. They had a gigantic altar dedicated to the Roman god Zeus. They had temples to the Roman leadership. Pergamum was the center for ancient Babylonian priesthood. There were lots of negative influences in Pergamum.
6. On the positive side, Jesus said, *“Yet you remain true to my name.”* With everything drawing them away from Jesus, they remained faithful. Consider our world today, we are in the same boat. There are so many things pulling us away from Jesus. We are living in a time where, it has become easy to sin. Even the government is helping us move away from

God. Gambling, marijuana, abortions, education . . . the list goes on and on. It is becoming easier and easier to turn away from God.

7. Too many people don't take the Word of God seriously. They say that it is just an old history book. If the Word of God is not powerful and authoritative, then why is Jesus' symbol for the Bible, a sword? Because it is "*it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow*" and it is "God-breathed". It is "alive and active" and it should be viewed that way and not just left on a shelf.
8. He reminds them of Antipas. One of their own who was put to death and did not turn away from Jesus. Facing death would identify the true believers. It is easy to say you are faithful to Jesus but add death to the consequences and we will see how faithful you are.
9. In verses 14 and 15, Jesus tells them what their failings are. First, they "*hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality.*" When the Hebrew nation was coming to the Promised Land in Numbers 22-25, we read about King Balak of Moab that was so afraid of the Israelites that he sent a prophet named Balaam to curse on them.
10. Balaam could not curse the Israelites for Balak, so he caused them to stumble by "enticing them to worship idols and commit sexual immorality." All of the members of the church at Pergamum were not participating in these acts but they were compromising and allowing it to continue. Yes, on the plus side the church was faithful but they were allowing improper beliefs to slip into the church.
11. The second thing that Jesus called them out on was they held "*to the teaching of the Nicolaitans*". The Nicolaitans believed that if we are always forgiven for our sins by God, then we may as well sin even more. Romans 5:20 says, "*God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.*" Evans calls it an improper use of grace, "The more I sin, the more I am given grace. So why not give God something to really forgive."
12. Jesus' warning is also like a two edged sword. First, He warns that there are some that are doing these bad things and they are to repent. And since it is continuing, that means that the rest of the church is overlooking these bad things or are compromising and allowing it to happen.
13. The church is allowing the world in and allowing their immoral living to continue. This one is happening in churches all over the U.S. today. Churches are saying, "We will accept

your GLBTQ lifestyle and we will even allow you to become leaders and pastors in our church.”

14. In verse 16, Jesus says “*Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*” Jesus is saying, “You fix it or I will.”
15. We say love the sinner but not the sin. Jesus is saying “Get rid of the sin, or else!” As long as people are willing to call on the name of Jesus, truly repenting and accepting Him as their savior, He will not come down here with His double edged sword and rebuke them.
16. Those that overcome are the ones that truly repent and those that do not compromise. In these verses, we learn that compromising and allowing sinners to continue to sin without repenting are equally bad. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. They must truly repent.
17. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul wrote to the church about a man that was a member of the church who was sleeping with his father’s wife and everyone knew it. Paul tells them “*God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked person from among you.*” Some say that we are not to judge. The church at Corinth thought they were being a loving church if they allowed the sinning man to continue to attend. We are to correct or rebuke. If we allow them to continue then we are guilty as the sinner.

“We must remember *both* reasons why it was important to deal with this sinning man among the Corinthian Christians: not only for the sake of purity in the church, but also for the sake of the man’s own salvation.” (Guzik)

Evans says, “Love is not enabling someone to continue in their own self-destruction. It’s compassionately and righteously pursuing the well-being of another.”

18. God wants the church to function based solely on the Word of God. He doesn’t want the world to creep into the church. He wants Satan outside the doors of the church.
19. Evans uses the example of the hunter and the bear. The bear is hungry and the hunter wants a new coat to keep warm. The two are mutually exclusive. There can be no compromise. If one wins, the other loses. The issue with being welcoming and affirming to gays is the same way. If we do so, then we would be inviting all other sins into the church. The sinners would face eternal life without God but we would be responsible for destroying God’s church.

20. 1 Peter 5:8 says that “*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*” You cannot compromise with the devil. Just like the bear, he wants to eat you.
21. The GLBTQ issue is different than most other sins. They say, “Accept me as I am. I am not going to change. This is the way that God made me.” Most other sins are hidden from us but they are the same in that God sees all of them and we are all sinners.
22. God wants to take on all of our sin and He wants us to be totally committed to Him. He doesn’t want us to have a mixture of Him and the world. It has to be all Him.
23. Revelation 2:16 gives Jesus’ warning them to REPENT! He says, “*Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*” My mom used to say, “Straighten up! Don’t make me come in there.”
24. Jesus said that He would come to them and correct them. To correct them, He would use the double-edged sword which is the Bible. He will bring judgment on the church. 1 Peter 4:17 tells us, “*For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” The church of God is not immune to His judgment, it is the starting place.
25. If they repent, they will become overcomers. They will receive 3 rewards.
  - a. *Hidden manna* – This is the perfect provision. The bread of Heaven. The Israelites would have perished without the manna sent by God. Tony Evans says, “this: If you’re living a life of compromise, God will not release His provision into your life like He would if you were a faithful kingdom follower. Compromise always costs you something. You may not know what it costs you, but it always limits God’s supply of hidden manna into your life and circumstances.”
  - b. *A white stone* – The white stone has other possible meanings but since it has your “new” name on it. It could be a pass or an invitation to a special part of Heaven or feast that is not for everyone in Heaven.
  - c. *A new name* – There are people that you have been closest to may have a pet name for you. This type of name signifies that you have a close personal relationship with the person and in this case it is God and Jesus. It is the saying, “My friends call me John but you can call me Mr. Green.” Would you rather be called “son” or by your given name.

26. The world today has a lot of uncommitted Christians. Willing to walking the walk on Sunday mornings for an hour or two but they live the rest of the week like a nonbeliever. They live in the world through compromise.
27. Because of their compromise, they will give up the special manna and the special access. When you have a backstage pass, you have full access to the performer that others don't have. Without a backstage pass, we are out front with everyone else. Entry into Heaven will be amazing but think about how amazing it will be with a full access pass. You will want to be the one with the white stone with your new name on it.