

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

Accessing Spiritual Power - Chapter 7

1. Read Revelation 3:7-13. Evans says that this small church of Philadelphia was living the Christian life both in worship but in their everyday life. They would not be moved away from Jesus. Philadelphia is the city of “brotherly love”.
2. Jesus begins His letter to this church by identifying Himself. He says that He is “*Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David*”. In the book of Leviticus, God tells Moses and the Hebrew nation to “*be holy, because I am holy*”(Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2). God’s attribute of being holy is like that of love, it is who God is. God is holy. Since Jesus is God, therefore Jesus too is holy.
3. Merriam-Webster defines ‘*holy*’ as “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness”. The second definition is “devoted entirely to the deity or the work of the deity”. Only God and Jesus can be holy like the first definition. Since He is holy and we are to be holy, we must be “devoted entirely” to Him.

Guzik says regarding Jesus being true: “There are two ancient Greek words that we might translate true. One means “true and not *false*.” The other means “true and not *fake*.” The ancient Greek word used here for true (*alethinos*) is the second, with the idea of “real” or “genuine.” Jesus is true in all of who He is; He is the *real* God and the *real* man.”

4. Also Jesus identifies Himself as the “*who holds the key of David*”. The “*key of David*” goes back to Isaiah 22:20-24. Verse 22 in Isaiah 22 says, “*I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*” Here in Revelation 3, Jesus essentially quotes Isaiah 22:22 in describing “*the keys of death and Hades*”. Combined with Revelation 1:18 which says, “*I hold the keys of death and Hades*”, the key of David must be “*the keys of death and Hades*”.
5. The keys also denote the authority of Jesus. When you bought your home, you didn’t give the keys to your house to just anyone. Matthew 28:18 says, “*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*” The keys also denote authority.
6. Evans uses the example of airplane pilots to compare living with and trusting God as opposed to relying on ourselves. Pilots use Doppler radar to see what is happening around them so they can adjust their course. Without it they may run into heavy turbulence and may not know how to get through it.

7. The same thing can happen if we are self-reliant and don't trust God. Evans says, "you have to understand that unseen forces out there want to keep you from having a safe landing. They want you to crash. But in His infinite wisdom and all-knowing power, God can keep you flying high and safe and ultimately enable you to reach your divine destination known as your calling. And in Jesus' message to the church in Philadelphia, we discover another key to living with earthly success in the midst of trials—tapping into kingdom authority."
8. Just like today, if we allow Him, the church of Philadelphia was dependant on Jesus to open and close doors. In Acts 16, Paul was heading into Asia to preach the gospel but Jesus would not allow them. Acts 16:7 says, "*When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.*" Jesus shut the door.
9. When our pulpit committee was interviewing pastors, we were ready to bring a pastor before the church for a vote but Jesus shut the door. Circumstances changed and it was clear that he was not the right man for our church. Calling a pastor is truly something that controlled by Jesus.
10. In Revelation 3:8, Jesus says that because they are weak, He has opened a door for them. Weak is an interesting word in the Bible. Joel 3:10 says, "*Let the weak say, 'I am strong.'*" In 2 Corinthians 12:9b-10, Paul says, "*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*" Being weak allows you to be reliant on Jesus, who is stronger than you ever will be.
11. Because they "*have kept His word and have not denied His name*", Jesus will humble the "*synagogue of Satan*" before them. As we have seen before in Jesus' letter to the church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:9) that those in the "*synagogue of Satan*" are those that claim to be Jews but who are not faithful to God. As I read about this church, I think of the 23rd Psalm. Verse 5 says, "*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*"

Evans says that we should adopt the attitude of humility. He says, "Living with humility involves remembering that, even on your best day, you're a sinner saved by grace. As long as that truth is front and center in your worldview and emotional grid, you will position yourself to live a life marked by humility and gratitude."

12. Another Psalm says it more accurately, "*The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'*" (Psalm 110:1). Your faithfulness to

Jesus will make you blessed and God will humble those who are not faithful or that mock the true believers.

13. Jesus says that He “*will keep you from the hour of trial*”. To me this is another scripture that supports a pre-tribulation rapture. Because they and we have been faithful then He will remove them and us from the Tribulation that is “*going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth*”. If we are raptured before the test then we will not be “*inhabitants of the earth*”.
14. Alternately, Paul tells us that this earth is not our home and in Philippians 3:20, he tells us that “*20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. 21 He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.*” Once we claim Jesus, then we are “*citizens of heaven*” and not “*inhabitants of the earth.*”
15. In his book, Evans has a section on “Putting In The Work”. He uses the example of auditing a college course. When you audit a course, you are saying I want the knowledge but I don’t want to put in the work, no homework, no test, no responsibility. As a Christian, it is important that we put in the work. We come to church on Sunday and are spoon fed a sermon. We need to spend time at home going deep in God’s word and developing our relationship with Jesus.

Evans says if you “don’t put in the work of personal and spiritual growth, you can’t expect to receive the transforming power that enables you to live as an overcomer. Information without application has no transforming value. Not only that, but it lacks the authority that comes tied to the credit for having invested in the developmental process entirely.”

16. Numerous times throughout His letters to the churches, Jesus encourages the members of the churches and us to persevere. If we are headed in the right direction then we are to continue that direction but if we are not then Jesus warns them and us to repent.
17. The church at Philadelphia is headed in the right direction. They are to maintain their course. He warns them not to let anyone cause them to change course. During our pastoral search about 10 years ago, one of our major concerns was making sure that we listened to God’s leading and did not call a pastor that would take us in the wrong direction or as Jesus puts it, “*so that no one will take your crown*” or cause us to lose it.

“This was not a crown of royalty, given because of royal birth. This was a crown of victory. Jesus encouraged His saints to finish their course with victory, to ‘play the second half’ just as strongly as they ‘played the first half.’” (Guzik)

18. In verse 12 of Revelation 3, Jesus tells them and us that He will make the overcomer a *“pillar in the temple of my God”*. What do you think of when you hear the word *“pillar”*? I think of strength, foundational, trusted. When we went to Corinth and Ephesus, the walls of the buildings were lying on the ground or made into rubble but many of the pillars were still standing.
19. In Galatians 2:9, Paul calls James, Peter and John, *“those esteemed as pillars”*. A pillar gives you a sense of trust, something you can hold on to and someone you can go to in times of trouble.
20. We are living in an uncertain time in history. If you allow it, the uncertainty will tear you up. Jesus says that the overcomers will never leave the Temple. The overcomers have a place of permanence with God in Heaven. God is immutable or unchangeable. He is someone you can hold on to in times of trouble. Your future is certain, you will be with God forever.
21. Continuing in verse 12, *“I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.”* Revelation 21:1-5, tells us that John *“saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”*. He also tells us that God has made all things new.
22. Back in His letter to the church of Pergamum, Jesus said that to the overcomer He would give *“that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”* Here Jesus tells them of a new Jerusalem and that He would have a new name. All of these things point to a personal relationship with Jesus. Today on earth, we cannot know the hearts of those around us except by what they do. The overcomer will have the mark of Jesus and we will readily know that they are an overcomer.

“This works together well with the image of a pillar. In the ancient world, having a special inscribed pillar added to one of the temples sometimes honored a faithful city servant or distinguished priest.” (Guzik) “Philadelphia honored its illustrious sons by putting their names on the pillars of its temples, so that all who came to worship might see and remember.” (Barclay)