

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

In order for a Christian to become an overcomer, they have choices to make and we will look at three of these choices in detail:

1. Choosing to access God's power against Satan
2. Choosing to be a conqueror in all things
3. Choosing to pursue godliness and grow in godliness.

We have said numerous times in this class that our goal is for others to see Jesus in us. This means that our goal in life should be to be like Jesus which makes our goal 'godliness'. "The pursuit (of godliness) is the foundation of our walk with Jesus while on this earth, and growing in godliness is the path to abundant life in Christ." (Evans)

Obtaining Power for Spiritual Battle - Chapter 9

1. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12 that "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*" We are in a spiritual battle but we don't have to face it alone.
2. On our side in our spiritual battle is Jesus. We have heard numerous times that God will "*never leave us or forsake us*" (Deuteronomy 31:8 and Hebrews 13:6). When it becomes a spiritual battle we can't win without Jesus on our side.
3. There is an old Gospel song called the "Champion of Love" sung by the Cathedrals. It speaks of a spiritual boxing match. "In this corner, of the good and the right stands a champion clothed in white." Jesus is our champion, Satan is no match for the power of Jesus.
4. Romans 8:31b says, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" In a battle, there have to be two sides. In the other corner is Satan. When we studied Satan in our S.S. class, we learned that he has many names. "Satan" in Hebrew means "the adversary" or "the opponent". The "devil" in the Greek means "the adversary".
5. As Jesus' adversary, Satan is not Jesus' equal. He can only have as much power as God gives Him. He is not God or a god, He was an angel. He is more powerful than we could hope to be. We need Jesus on our side.
6. Satan views his final goal as defeating Jesus. He wants to prevent us from doing God's will. He can't take away our salvation. He wants to make Christians ineffective at

reaching others. If he can ruin your witness for Jesus then he is winning. He wants to prevent us from overcoming.

7. Satan will use every trick in his book to prevent us from overcoming. He will bully you, deceive you, he will lure you away from the right path and distract you from doing God's will. He has perfected his tools of evil. He even used them to attack Jesus. (Luke 4:1-13)
8. One of his other names is "*the accuser*". Revelation 12:10b-11 tells us, "*For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*" It is only through Jesus' power and our faith that we can defeat Satan. It is the power of the blood of Jesus.
9. We can see Satan's handiwork all around us today. When the news media started years ago, they just reported the news. Now they put their own spin on it. CNN, Fox News and even local news stations have become great propaganda houses pumping out news modified or sensationalized to get people to follow them. They begin to sound like the propaganda machine used in Nazi Germany before WWII. Even the weathermen have turned into Chicken Little sensationalizing the local weather. "The sky is falling, the sky is falling. Be weather aware! Watch me!"
10. Revelation 12 sheds light on the fact that our battle with Satan is a spiritual battle and that it will get worse. Evans calls this spiritual battle "clash of the kingdoms". The battle is good versus evil and Satan will be ousted from heaven to be on the earth. He and his minions will work overtime because their time will be short, 7 years.

"Even before Adam fell in the garden through committing the first sin, Satan was kicked out of heaven and sent to earth. And since the fall, all hell has broken loose down here. Yet Satan still has access to the heavenly realm, and that's why a spiritual battle continues to take place. The dragon, also known as the devil, is our adversary, and he's free to create havoc on earth. He's also free to speak on that havoc based on the permission we give him with our unrighteous words and deeds." (Evans)

11. Satan is free to go back and forth from the earth to heaven. He can lead us off the narrow path and then tell God what we have done.

"You and I are living in a day of mass deception. People are being tricked about their sexual identity. People are being tricked about their gender. They're being deceived about the basics of and definition for marriage. They're being deceived on how to best handle finances. If we were

to be honest, we'd have to admit that we're all being deceived in many ways when it comes to Satan seeking to usurp God's rightful rule in our lives." (Evans)

12. We can all see how others are being influenced by Satan but it is difficult to see his impact on our lives. Jesus said, "*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*" (Matthew 7:5) Things haven't changed much. Where do you think the plank and our sin started? Satan in the Garden
13. Deceit is one of Satan's most powerful tools. We all are exposed to it on a regular basis and we have trouble seeing it working in our lives. Just because we are Christians doesn't mean that we are immune to Satan's attacks. In fact, we are the primary targets for deceitful attacks.
14. Based on what it says in Revelation 12:11 (#7 above), "*They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony*". From time to time we sing the old hymn "Power in the Blood" but do we really believe and understand it. Satan first tempts us to sin and then once we give in and sin, he uses it to beat us over the head with it. We require the power of Jesus to get back on the right path and erase our sin.
15. Jesus died on that cross to remove all sin from our lives. Not just the sin that we committed before we accepted Him but any future sin. Jesus' blood can wash away all of our sin. Jesus blood can make the vilest sinner clean.
16. 1 John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*" Don't let Satan beat you over the head with unconfessed sin. Unconfessed sin can interfere with your relationship with Jesus and prevent you from overcoming Satan's attacks.
17. The last part of Revelation 12:11 says, "*and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*" The apostle Paul said it this way, "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" (Philippians 1:21) We should have the heart of Paul. Today in the U.S., when we speak out for Jesus we expect some persecution but not to the point of death. Unfortunately, we come up with other excuses for staying quiet with the help of Satan.
18. There are places in the world today where people are willing to live their lives with this attitude. Consider in Egypt, Coptic Christians make up about 10% of the population. The ancestors of these Christians go back to the years that Joseph and Mary brought their young son into Egypt for safety. Evans has a few stories from these Christians living in a world surrounded by Muslims.

“I write that the words haunt me because as I look out over our collective body of Christ today, at those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus—“people of the cross”—I wonder if anyone would be willing to give up their physical life in order to be saved by God because they’d witnessed our own commitment to Ya Rabbi Yasou (*Oh my Lord Jesus*). Would anyone see our lives and say in the face of imminent death, “Their God is my God”? I wonder. Or, rather, do those outside the church look at the contemporary church of Jesus in America today and find little more than a religious social club? Is it made up of people no different from the society we’ve been called to transform? In the end, would we just become another church like the ones in the book of Revelation who heard condemnation rather than commendation?” (Evans)

19. Satan seems to be winning today. If you look at the people inside “the church”, do they look and behave any different than those outside the church? Is the divorce rate of Christians, percentage of abusive spouses any different? The number of welcoming and affirming churches, as well as the number of GLTBQ pastors is growing.

“The principles of surrender and humility have been lost on us. Surrender means much more than giving up your life in the face of persecution. Surrender refers to giving up your will for God’s will to be done. It means yielding your purpose for God’s purpose to be lived out through you. Even Jesus had to face the principle of surrender in the garden of Gethsemane when He asked that God’s will be done, not His own.” (Evans)

20. In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.*” This is true surrender. How often does it say that we should “take up our cross”? Daily.

21. Does this mean that we are to take up our cross and head for Calvary daily? No, Jesus already did that. It means as the old hymn says, “Where He leads me, I will follow. . . I’ll go with Him, with Him all the way.” It is making His will your will. He is the number one priority in your life. There is no, “Just a minute Lord. I have to take care of my life first.”

22. Tony Evans says, “Jesus has a big fan club.” Taking up your cross daily should not conjure up thoughts of being a fan. A fan is a “enthusiastic admirer” and not a committed follower. A fan stands on the sidelines and says, “Way to go Jesus!” A committed follower prays “Thy will be done” and makes it their will.

GOD’S POWER MANIFESTED IN OUR LIVES

23. Read Philippians 3:8-11. Paul was “Not a Fan”. His entire life was given to God. It was misguided at first but Paul was willing to listen to Jesus and become committed to Him, even unto death. Paul was beheaded.
24. I have heard people say that “If I accept Christ, I will have to give up the fun stuff of life.” Paul said, “*Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him.*” (Phil. 3:8-9 NLT)
25. Power of the Resurrection. One of the most overlooked and under appreciated powers in history is the power of the resurrection. In verses 10 of Philippians 3, Paul says he wants to not only know Jesus but to know the power of the resurrection.
26. In Romans 8:11, Paul says, “*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*” This verse speaks to the unlimited power of God to resurrect Jesus but also the same power will raise us from the dead. Without this power we will die and that would be the end.
27. On the road to Damascus, Paul encountered our resurrected savior and went from persecuting Christians to leading them. Evans says, “What happened to Paul was a genuine “power encounter.” He came face-to-face with resurrection power. When you know Christ, the old stuff is erased. No wonder the apostle said, in effect, “Out with the old knowledge. I’ve found the new!” . . . victorious Christians know Christ more closely, align themselves under His rule more fully, and thus experience His resurrection power.”
28. The Power of the Fellowship of Sufferings. Philippians 3:10 says that Paul wants to know “*the fellowship of His sufferings*”. As humans we would like to omit that part. We are all in until He throws in death and suffering.
29. Paul understood what he was saying. 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 tells us all about Paul’s suffering for Christ. Jesus even tells us that we are blessed when we are persecuted or suffer for His sake. Matthew 5:11-12 records, “*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”
30. We are all in until the going gets tough. What do you mean that I not only have to accept Jesus as my savior but I have to be obedient and endure persecution. That is what true love is. “*To love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and love him with all your mind.*” Revelation 12:11 says, “*They triumphed over him (Satan) by the*

blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

31. Evans says, “Jesus desires that we connect so closely with Him and know His heart and His Word so deeply that we think His thoughts and anticipate what He’s about to say next in guiding, leading, or directing us.” Definitely not a fan.
32. The Power of Relationship. Paul starts verse 10 of Philippians 3 with, “*I want to know Christ.*” Paul wasn’t talking about a distant relationship but he wanted to know Jesus personally. We should do the same. Think about why you are going to church every week. Getting to know Jesus personally should be at the top of your list.
33. As a younger man I attended church because it was what I should do, or to serve God or because it would be good for me and my family. Today, it is because of my personal relationship with Jesus. Some of the old reasons may still apply but they all interconnect with my personal relationship with Jesus. There isn’t anything that I wouldn’t do for my best friend.
34. The Power of Revitalized Life. Romans 8:11 says, “*The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.*” Just as Jesus was resurrected from the dead, we too will be resurrected.

“Why did even the shadow of Peter passing over sick people heal them (Acts 5:15), and why did his chains fall off in prison (Acts 12:7)? How was he able to praise God for the privilege of suffering for Christ (Acts 5:40-41)? Because Peter met Jesus in a new way at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter knew Christ in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings—and he had a revitalized life.” (Evans)

35. The Power of Connection. Matthew 15 records Jesus’ parable where He says, that He is the vine and we are the branches. Verse 4b says “*No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*” Without our connection to Jesus, we cannot do anything. The old hymn says, “Without Him how lost would I be”. We need the power of the connection to Jesus.
36. Recently I repaired a light fixture for Betty that had a short in the switch. The light had lost connection to its source of electricity. There was no light coming from the bulb. I needed to fix the connection. When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, Evans says, “You need a closer, tighter, and deeper relationship with the One who has what you need to overcome, because He Himself has overcome it all.” Being under Jesus’ authority, due to our intimate

relationship with Him, puts us over Satan's power so that we are overcomers (Romans 16:20).

The entire United Methodist Church denomination has opened their doors to the GLTBQ community. "The UMC also officially believes that 'all people are of sacred worth' and 'implores families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends'."

- Marriage - The UMC broadened its definition of marriage to include two people of consenting age, and removed punishments for ministers who officiate at same-sex weddings. The UMC also amended its official teachings to affirm marriage as a sacred covenant between two people of faith.
- Clergy - The UMC lifted its ban on GLBTQ clergy, including removing language from its rulebook that said homosexuality was incompatible with Christian teaching.
- Social Principles - The UMC approved a rewrite of its Social Principles that describes human sexuality as a sacred gift and calls for human rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and other categories.