

## 08) Overcoming

Some Christians think that salvation is about forgiveness alone, and once forgiven, you can continue to live your life as you please. They rationalize that because we are sinners, we can't overcome sin and God doesn't expect us to. Some would even consider or call any desires or attempts to overcome as "legalism" (an attempt to earn salvation by one's own performance/behavior) and those who believe so as "legalists". But is that true?

Lets discover what the Bible really says and teaches about overcoming ....

John 15:5. Using the analogy of a grape vine and its branches, Jesus said that if we remain (a continuous action without end) connected to Him, that we will bear fruit, but without Him we are powerless against sin. It is the vine that supplies the water and nutrients to the branches so they can produce fruit. But if the branch was detached (cut off) from the vine, it would wither and die.

Galatians 5:22,23. Allow me to ask the question this way: would you like to be more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithfulness, gentleness, and having self-control? The fruit Jesus is talking about, and offering us, is His character that He wants to produce in us through the working of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit will transform us if we allow Him to. As a human Jesus faced every temptation common to mankind and remained sinless. So when we have His character that is uncondemned by the law (meaning it is never in violation of God's law), then we can also be overcomers, but in and through His strength, not our own. That is not legalism, that is grace!

James 2:14-17. Faith without corresponding behavior and lifestyle is not faith at all. It is a dead lifeless faith. But true faith results in a changed life and lifestyle. It is the result (fruit) of faith in Jesus. Now certainly, just as the branch grows gradually, our overcoming is also a process that takes time. The process is called "sanctification", which means to be set apart for holy purpose. And that is exactly what God does, He sets us apart from the world for His holy calling, plans, and purpose.

1 John 2:3,4. God is very clear and direct here. The person who has a genuine, personal, saving relationship with Christ, will be desiring and striving to keep all God's commandments. Not to earn their salvation, but out of joy that they have already accepted it as His free gift. It is just as direct in saying that those who do not keep God's commandments are liars. Some may be sincere, but sincerely deceived is still deceived.

1 John 5:3. God's commandments are associated with God's love. They were designed to protect us, and rightly understood and lived they are not a burden.

John 14:15. Jesus declares that people who love Him will keep God's commandments. While God's love and grace is the only means that can empower us to do so, our love for God is the only acceptable motivation for doing so.

1 John 4:19. And we should love Him when we experience and understand His love for us. A love beyond our understanding, but not beyond our experiencing, that God suffered for us. Jesus died for our sins so we wouldn't have to!

Philippians 2:13. Scripture is very clear that it is God who works in us, changing our desires (attitudes towards sin), and empowering us so we can obey and live according to His will and commandments. If we are willing to let Him.

John 13:34,35. This was a “new” commandment to those John was speaking to. But it certainly was not new, it had been around forever. God is love, His commandments are an expression of His love. They call for us to live a life of love to Him and to others. But always and only empowered by His grace,

Romans 13:8-10. As a result, true, genuine, godly love is in perfect harmony with, and an expression of, God’s law. That law is clearly pointed out in the next few verses as being the ten commandments.

Matthew 22:36-40. Jesus simply condensed the ten commandments into two, as the first four describe what proper behavior would be in a loving relationship with and to God. And the next six describe a loving relationship in our treatment of, and behavior towards, others.

Exodus 20:1-17. Here we find the ten commandments, spoken by God and later written on stone by the very finger of God. He did this to show their importance, their holiness, and their eternalness. But please notice what I’ll refer to as the “preamble”. God begins by reminding them that He delivered them from bondage. That was the reason for His expectancy of their obedience – their love as a result of His deliverance. Lets briefly summarize each commandment:

1) Nothing should come between us and God, anything that interferes with that relationship has, in essence, become our God.

2) Nothing should ever be used, created, or crafted to replicate Him to remind us of Him, and be worshipped as Him. Not even as a “proxy” for God.

3) This includes cussing/swearing, but goes much farther than that. If someone claims to be a Christian but misrepresents Christ, His truth, or His character they have also taken His name in vain.

4) There is only one of the ten commandments that calls us to “remember”. Yet it is the one that has been most forgotten by Christians, and even declared as done away with or changed. The Sabbath was given to mankind at creation. It was to be a perpetual reminder that God is both our Creator and Redeemer. On that seventh day of the week, the day we call Saturday today, Gen 2:1-3 says He blessed it – blessings that cannot be

obtained by skipping the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath or trying to keep it on a different day of the week; and that He rested – He set an example for us of ceasing the normal work that is done on days 1-6. He also rested in the grave on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (Saturday) Sabbath when His work of redemption at Calvary was finished; and He sanctified it – He set it aside for Holy use. This commandment sits at a transition between love for God and love for man, because the Sabbath, as holy time, was a gift, it is a full day to use just for building good relations with God and man.

5) God asks us to respect and honor authority, all authority that He sets over us, including His. We learn this important lesson with the first authority we have in life, our parents. But if the lesson is not taught or learned, life will become very difficult, perhaps even shortened.

6) As Creator God is the Author and giver of life. While God allowed self-defense, He prohibited anyone from seeking to murder another person in deed or even in thought.

7) God instituted marriage between one man and one woman. Marriage is also used to symbolize Christ's relationship with His church, portrayed as His bride. He gave mankind the gift of intimacy, including sexual intimacy, to be enjoyed in and strengthen the marriage bond. To seek sexual intimacy, in thought or deed, outside of marriage or from/with someone not our spouse is forbidden by God,

8) God promises to provide all our needs (Phil 4:19). To steal from others what He has not provided us demonstrates a lack of faith, as well as a heart that chooses to harm others. We usually think of stealing as the theft of material things. But we can also be guilty of stealing a person's reputation, their position/standing, their employment, etc. which is equally wrong.

9) God is pure, His integrity is unquestionable. Ours should be too. We should not be tale bearers, or gossipers. That is more than telling lies, it includes telling part-lies, and even telling truth in settings it should not be shared.

10) Temptation is not a sin, but sin often begins when the temptation is cherished in thought. Coveting is not wanting something "like/similar" to what someone else has. It is wanting the very thing they have. It too is a lack of faith in God, and an act of selfish jealousy and disregard for others.

John 6:38-40. As a human, even Jesus surrendered His will to the Heavenly Father's will. In doing so, the salvation of mankind was secured. Jesus used strength from the Father to overcome all temptation, all sin., and to live perfectly, righteously, holy.

John 12:49. His daily life was a demonstration of seeking for and living for His Father's will.

John 10:17-18. Jesus was fully divine and fully human. The plan of salvation required that He not use His divinity to overcome sin. As that would be an advantage mankind does not

have. As a human, He relied instead on His Father's grace and power. But once He was crucified on Calvary and the debt of sin was paid, Jesus could use His divinity to raise Himself from the grave.

Philippians 2:8. Our mind cannot fully comprehend the humility He experienced in becoming human with the physical and mental degradation that sin had brought to humanity. But He did it, out of love, to save us from sin.

John 5:30. He completely, fully, set aside (surrendered) his will as a human to do the will of the Father, every day, every moment of His human life.

John 10:30. His human life was a perfect reflection of the Father's character.

John 17:20-21. As a result, Jesus Christ can, and will, share His victory, His power, with you if you choose to surrender to Him and to receive Him. You can then be an overcomer too. Jesus prayed for His followers and for you; that through His righteousness and power you and I and others could be united and be one with Him and the Father. This results in a powerful witness of God to the world.

John 15:4. We can be overcomes as long as we choose to remain in a surrendered and saving walk with Christ.

Hebrews 10:16. God repeats His new covenant in the New Testament. He will put His laws into our hearts and minds.

Praise God! Being an overcomer is the result of His grace received into you life by your faith. Will you exercise that choice, that faith, today? Will you choose to let God enable you to be an overcomer and a doer of His law?