

THE
CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE
OVERCOMERS
AS THE
DISPENSATIONAL
INSTRUMENT
TO TURN THE AGE

Messages Given by Ron Kangas
At the Ohio Conference
Spring 2018

Message One
Knowing the Overcoming Christ

Scripture Reading: Rev. 12:10-11; 11:15;
John 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14; 19:7

- I. God wants to end this age and bring in the age of the kingdom; for this great dispensational move, God must have the overcomers as His dispensational instrument—Rev. 12:10-11; 11:15.
- II. Through their experience and enjoyment of Christ, the overcomers have an experiential knowledge of the overcoming Christ—3:21; 5:5-6.
- III. In the writings of the apostle John, we have a revelation of the overcoming Christ—John 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14:
 - A. “These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world”—John 16:33:
 1. In this verse *the world* refers to the physical realm, and *Me* refers to the divine and mystical realm of the pneumatic Christ.
 2. Through faith and baptism we have entered into an organic union with the overcoming Christ—John 3:15; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27.
 3. “Everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world”—1 John 5:4a; John 3:6:

- a. The regenerated spirit of the regenerated believer overcomes the world.
 - b. The believer's divine birth with the divine life is the basic factor for such a victorious living—1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.
- 4. "This is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith"—5:4b:
 - a. The regenerated believers have the capacity of the divine life to overcome the world, the powerful satanic world system—2:15.
 - b. Our faith brings us into the organic union with the Triune God and believes that Jesus is the Son of God so that we may be begotten of God and have the divine life, by which we are enabled to overcome the Satan-organized-and-usurped world—5:4b.
- 5. "Who is he who overcomes the world except him who believes that Jesus is the Son of God"—v. 5:
 - a. Such a believer is one who has been begotten of God and has received the divine life—John 1:12-13; 3:16.
 - b. The divine life empowers the believer to overcome the evil world energized by Satan.
- B. "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome"—Rev. 5:5:

1. The lion is a symbol of Christ, portraying Him as a strong fighter against the enemy, as prophesied in Genesis 49:8-9.
 2. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Christ overcame and defeated the rebellious Satan, the enemy of God, and as the redeeming Lamb, He took away the sin of fallen man, thereby removing the hindrances to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—Rev. 5:5-6; Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:11.
- C. "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne"—Rev. 3:21:
1. Here to overcome is to overcome the lukewarmness and pride of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in—vv. 15-16, 18-20.
 2. To sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer, that he may participate in the Lord's authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the earth in the coming kingdom—v. 21.
- D. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them"—

17:14:

1. Christ will come as a fighting General with the overcoming believers as His army to fight against Antichrist and the kings under him with their armies at Armageddon—19:11-21.
 2. In 17:14 *chosen* is mentioned after *called*; to be called is to be saved, whereas to be chosen is to be approved by the Lord by virtue of an overcoming life—Matt. 22:14.
- IV. The overcomers are produced by the overcoming Christ as the sevenfold intensified Spirit, and they are burdened for the building up of the Body of Christ as the preparation of the bride of Christ—Eph. 4:16; Rev. 5:6; 19:7-9.

<< Week 1 - Day 1 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Eph. 1:9: Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 3:11: According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Rev. 4:11: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.

Today's Reading

I am happy to be with you again to love the Lord, pursue the Lord, contact the Lord, and be one with the Lord to do whatever He wants to do to end this age, get married, and bring in the kingdom of God.

God is eternal. He is self-existing and ever-existing. Beyond time, beyond space, when there was nothing, God could say of Himself, "I AM." This eternal God has what Paul calls in Ephesians 3:11, an "eternal purpose." We may say a different, yet exact translation would be, "the purpose of the ages." It is eternal, but something has to take place in time and space to fulfill and then consummate what God's eternal purpose is.

We know from Ephesians 1 and 3 that God has a will for which He created all things, and in His will is what Paul calls God's good pleasure, the desire of His heart. According to God's will with His good pleasure, God in Christ made a purpose that was planned in eternity past and that will exist eternally in the future. According to the revelation in Ephesians, God's eternal purpose is to have the church understood as the corporate expression of Christ, who is the embodiment and expression of the Triune God. For this, God created the universe with space and time, He created our galaxy, our solar system, our sun and the earth, and created human beings on the earth in His image and with His dominion to carry out here and now His eternal purpose to have a corporate expression of Himself in Christ, and this Christ Himself is the embodiment and expression of the Triune God.

We need to understand Genesis 1:26 in the light of verses such as Ephesians 3:11, which speaks of God's purpose, and Revelation 4:11, which tells us that it's because of God's will all things were created. I repeat, with God in His eternal Godhead, there is no limitation of space and time. But He created the universe with space and time, and there is a simple note at the very beginning of Genesis in the Recovery Version. This simple note says so much. Time is for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. All of us, as we know exceedingly well, are living in space and are limited, and are living in time and are limited. But from God's point of view, the length of time He has measured out to us to live on this earth is for our participating in the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

Because God's purpose is the purpose of the ages, and because God's purpose is carried out in time, we may go on to see that God carries out His purpose gradually in stages that we may call dispensations, or ages. And once God has accomplished what He intends in a particular age, there will be a very radical turn of the age into another age. For simplicity, we may say the first of these four ages goes from creation until the law was given through Moses. This is largely an age of promise. God eventually called out Abraham to be the father of a new kind of people; God became the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through them produced the nation of Israel. Once He brought them out of slavery in Egypt, the first age, the age of promise, came to an end.

When God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and enacted the covenant and gave the moral law in the ten commandments, that marked the beginning of the age of law. In each age, God not only has something He wants to do, but He also has a particular standard by which He evaluates everyone. The age of the law indicates that God in that age was dealing with His people according to the law that He revealed through Moses. He used that law to preserve them and to protect them until Christ would come.

God in His wisdom realized that fallen human beings cannot fulfill the requirements of His law, so He also instituted a system of worship with the offerings, all of which typify Christ, so that as an anticipation of the coming Savior, God's people who broke the law could find

forgiveness by offering these sacrifices that are symbols of Christ. Toward the end of that age, there were in Jerusalem a small number of saints who were burdened very much for the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, and they prayed fervently. One of these saints was a very elderly man, and it was communicated to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Joseph and Mary brought to him the infant Jesus according to the custom of the law to be circumcised, and Simeon took him in his arms and he said, "Lord, let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes see your salvation." With the coming of the Lord Jesus, especially with the beginning of His ministry, the age began to change again from law to the age of grace through which believers are saved by grace through faith. This is also the age of the church, the age during which Christ's prophecy will be fulfilled, "I will build My church." It's also the age of mystery because what God is doing to build the church is mystical, it's hidden, and it's inward in the way of life.

We know from Revelation that the proclamation will be made, the mystery of God has been fulfilled. This present age, the age of grace, the age during which the church will be built up, and the age of mystery is coming to an end. Two crucial prophecies related to the end of this age have already been fulfilled. The second one, one chief executive tried to annul, but another chief executive reaffirmed. The first prophecy to be fulfilled took place in 1948, and this was the restoration of the nation of Israel. The second prophecy that was fulfilled took place in 1967. Many of us remember that very well, the six-day war in

which Jerusalem, the old city, was recovered to Israel. I'm not talking politics; I'm talking God's government. Although a previous president took the official stand that Israel should return to the borders of the pre-1967 war, God did not agree with that. Instead there is a move of the U.S. embassy toward Jerusalem, which is not an insignificant matter.

Sadly, I think mainly to find an excuse for the divisions that exist among believers and the hundreds of denominations that exist with no scriptural ground, Bible teachers, theologians, and ministers say, "We'll all be one church in heaven. When we get to heaven, we will drop all our labels." I heard a very faithful, godly, Ph.D.-educated Presbyterian minister say this more than once. But the Lord said, "I will build My church." My church, not pastor so-and-so's church; My church. The Lord went on to say the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. He then connected this built-up church with the kingdom and His coming again, all in Matthew 16.

<< Week 1 - Day 2 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Dan. 9:27: And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week; and in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and will replace the sacrifice and the oblation with abominations of the desolator, even until the complete destruction that has been determined is poured out upon the desolator.

Rev. 17:14b: and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them.

Rev. 19:7: Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Today's Reading

We are now living in the third age; all these ages are in the old creation. The fourth age will be the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ with His co-kings on the earth. We realize very well that although as Christians we have the common faith and the common salvation, we differ concerning points that are not of the faith; we recognize this. There are many who believe that we are already in the millennium, the devil is already bound. I find that hard to believe, that the devil is

inactive, that he is bound and in the abyss. All you have to do is to watch the news for 30 seconds – that’s about all I can take – and you realize that isn’t the case. Others believe that there won’t be any millennium at all. We’re not going to debate this. If you have a different view, it doesn’t affect our fellowship, it doesn’t affect our receiving you, and it doesn’t affect our love for you, but the ministry that we are presenting now is fully convinced that there will be a fourth age, the age of the kingdom, in which the King of kings will establish His throne in Jerusalem and the nations on the earth will be ruled over by the co-kings.

In every age there is a test. There will have to be a test of the people born during the kingdom, so that the enemy Satan will be released from the abyss. He will lead his final rebellion. Some will be foolish enough to follow him, while others will not. That will mark the end of time. Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth, the center of which is the New Jerusalem, which is not a material city. No, it’s not a gigantic space station circling the earth. No, it’s not an island moving toward the earth at the speed of light. These are some of the crazy suggestions that we’ve come across. The New Jerusalem is called the wife, and I assure you, a wife is really a person. The Lord said when He gave the commission at the end of Matthew, “I will be with you all the days until the end of the age.” This is what will happen, we believe, rather soon. If some my age for some reason finish our course before then, there are many, many here, and I’m glad so many college students are here. I fully believe you

will live to see all the events that will precede the final end.

We know from the book of Daniel that there is the prophecy concerning the 70 weeks. A week is considered not seven days, but seven years. We are now in a period between week 69 and 70. The whole age of grace, of the church, of the mystery, is an interval. Here's what's going to happen. One day, five to ten years from now – who knows what the technology will be – we will turn on a device, or our eyeglass frames will pick up the news somehow, that a wayward rocket launched by anti-Israeli forces went off course and blew up the mosque on the temple mount. The orthodox Jews, who have been waiting for this for decades, are swarming on the mount, have claimed possession of it, and have declared the beginning of the rebuilding of the temple. That will initiate a drastic international crisis. Israel will make an agreement with a European leader. He will be a remarkable, charismatic, eloquent, brilliant leader appearing in Europe.

As soon as Israel makes that agreement, the seventieth week begins. During the first three and one-half weeks, the temple will be rebuilt, and the sacrificial system will be restored according to prophecy. Then this leader will be assassinated and resuscitated; when he is resuscitated, imitating Christ's resurrection, he will be Antichrist. He will place himself in the temple and demand to be worshipped, and the great tribulation will begin. The rapture of the victorious believers, the

firstfruit, will take place just before that. I fully believe that many in this room will be watching all these developments: the clearing of the temple mount and the covenant made with the European leader. Once you know the covenant is made, you've got at most three and one-half years before the great tribulation begins.

Technically, the end of this age is that last three and one-half years. We're getting very close. Those of us who were very much aware of the world situation in June 1967 can say without reservation that the sovereign God can rearrange the world situation in a day. It's not hard for Him to do this, to do that, and the whole geopolitical situation is changed. The whole earth is on edge. What is the challenge to Him is to prepare the bride as His counterpart. The Lord as the Bridegroom is coming back for her in a secret coming. When He comes openly, He will come in glory as the Sun of righteousness to judge the earth and to establish His kingdom. But what's in His heart is that His bride would make herself ready, the one for whom He gave Himself up on the cross.

The bride in Revelation 19:7 and the wife in Revelation 21:10-11 are somewhat different. The bride, the wife in Revelation 21, includes all the believers, because she is manifested after the thousand years. The bride in Revelation 19:7 consists only of the overcoming believers produced in that age. The reason is, God has a purpose fulfilled in ages. In every age there is, generally speaking, the failure of God's people as a whole. But among God's people, there are those who are not super; they're just

normal. They are faithful and absolute for the Lord, and they accomplish His intention in that age. Those believers are what we call the overcomers. They are the victors; they are the conquerors.

A vivid example of this is in Exodus with the incident of the golden calf and God's dealing with that situation. One tribe, the tribe of Levi, rose up to take action. Prior to that, God had made known His intention that every Israelite would be a priest; Israel would be a nation of priests. But as a whole, they failed, so the priesthood was limited to the Levites. The Levites were the minority that didn't fail when the majority failed, so they signify the overcomers. The same principle applies with Gideon's army of 300. The majority of the people were not qualified to fight, but 300 with Gideon were the victors. The Levites and the warriors with Gideon were a minority of the people who did two things. First, they fulfilled God's desire. Second, and this is crucial, they did not act on behalf of themselves. They acted on behalf of all the people of God. They represent all the people of God. They are selfless. They are faithful. They are victorious, first for the Lord and His purpose, but they realize that they are part of the people, and they are victorious and faithful on behalf of all the other people, so that the Lord could consider, "I have accomplished my purpose in this age."

Now we come to the age of the church, and we'll see when we go through the outline that there are many references to overcoming and overcomers in the New Testament. Once again, I'm sorry to say, there are certain mistakes

in teaching by some of the most outstanding Bible teachers of today. One of the most outstanding is a man named John MacArthur. He's published dozens of books. I surely respect him as a brother and as a student of the Word, but he misses the point concerning the truth regarding the overcomers, and, as a result, millions of Christians in the United States are led astray.

We will see that the apostle John reveals two aspects of overcomers. In his first epistle, all the believers who have faith in the Son of God overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Read these verses in 1 John 5. If you are a believer, and you believe in the One who said, "I have overcome the world," you are an overcomer because you believe in the victorious Christ. That is the overcoming of the world. But in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus the Overcomer is speaking to the churches, and He's calling out for overcomers from the local churches. If everyone was an overcomer, He would just say, "You're all overcomers. Everything is fine." But except for the church in Philadelphia that was according to God's purpose, and the church in Smyrna that was the suffering church, all the churches are degraded. Protestantism is degraded, Catholicism is degraded, and the recovered church may be degraded. The Lord is calling for overcomers not in the way of 1 John 5, to overcome the world, but in the way of Revelation 2 and 3, to overcome what has been hindering God from building up the church as the preparation of the bride. It is these overcomers produced here and now on the earth that will be the means by which the Lord turns the age.

<< Week 1 - Day 3 >>

Verses to Enjoy

2 Tim. 4:8: Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

2 Tim. 4:10a: For Demas has abandoned me, having loved the present age,

Rev. 12:11: And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

Today's Reading

The general subject: The Characteristics of the Overcomers (the Victors) as the Dispensational Instrument to Turn the Age. The kingdom is not just going to come. The Lord Jesus is not just going to decide one day, "I think I will return." If the kingdom would come all by itself, why are we instructed to pray for the kingdom to come? How can the kingdom come in manifestation if none of the believers living today want the kingdom to come, care about the kingdom coming, want this age to end, want the age of the kingdom to begin? Here and now, there needs to be the necessary cooperation with the Triune God to fulfill His purpose for this age. That purpose the Lord said very clearly, "I will

build My church.” This church is the Body of Christ, the one new man, and the bride, the counterpart of Christ. If the bride has not made herself ready because the church has not been built up, then the Lord is not coming back. But once the bride is getting ready, very quickly He could change the world situation, raise up this dynamic ruler in Europe, bring about the coalition of nations, cause the United States to be an impregnable fortress, the wilderness, but to be withdrawn from the Middle East, so the geopolitical situation changes. There will be a European power with 700 million citizens, Gog and Magog, and from the rising sun, millions of warriors. Eventually, the focus will be on the Middle East.

Ever since 1969 when a man named Hal Lindsay published a best-seller book, “The Late, Great Planet Earth,” American Christians have been enamored by prophecy. So, you have the “Left Behind” series. The author of “Left Behind” is now with the Lord. Otherwise, I wish I could have told him, if you follow your own teaching, you will be left behind, because you put into fiction all of your doctrine that no matter what kind of Christian you are, you’re considered an overcomer, you won’t go through the tribulation, you will be raptured, you will be in the kingdom, you will be everything. That’s simply not the truth. Actually, age after age after age, God’s move depends on the overcomers, those believers who receive grace to be faithful and victorious in the midst of failure and degradation.

We want to consider in four messages at least some of the

characteristics of the overcomers as the dispensational instrument to turn the age. A dispensational instrument is the means by which God acts to accomplish His purpose in a given age and then turn the age to the next age. We need to understand the principle by which God is working, which is also the principle of prayer. Why does God want us to pray? He already knows everything, so He doesn't need information from us. He's omnipotent and all-powerful, is He not? He can do whatever He wants. But in this age, God will not do whatever He wants, because He has established the principle of operating through His people who are open to Him and who are one with Him and who are set to do His will.

The Lord wants the kingdom to come. The Lord didn't say, "Don't worry. Just go about your affairs. The kingdom will come." The Lord said that those who enter the kingdom enter it violently. They fight their way in. The Lord said that we need to pray for the kingdom to come. Now, I'm just about ready to go through the outline. But I realize that, just to use a human expression, the psychology of a brother my age in relation to human life in this age, and the psychology of a 20-year-old college student are quite different. An older believer, like many of us, who has gone through a lot of things in human life, can really want this age to change.

I believe that matters to the Lord. But I believe what will really touch His heart will be an ever-increasing number of young people. These young adults, who have their whole future, their whole lives ahead of them, day by day

are living in a normal way as they should to get their education, to get employment, to get married, to have a family, and all the normal living that goes on. But even in their twenties, they love the Lord's appearing. They do not say, "Lord Jesus, come in 60 years. Let me enjoy life first."

I believe the Lord in His great love, in His absolute faithfulness, wants to place this love into the hearts of all His believers, but especially in the young who have their whole lives ahead of them. He wants to place in them the love for His appearing, because when it comes down to it as this age is nearing the end, there will be two kinds of love among the Christians. Both kinds are mentioned in 2 Timothy 4. Paul, because he was at the end of his life, knew for sure that he was an overcomer. You can only know you finished the race after you have finished. Paul said, "I know there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, but not only for me, but for all those who love His appearing." Not just love the Lord but love the Lord's appearing. He went on to point out that one of his coworkers, Demas (he mentioned him positively in another letter), "has abandoned me, having loved the present age." When it came down to being one with an imprisoned, soon-to-be-martyred apostle, that's risky.

Many of the believers in the mainland of China around 1951 and 1952 were put to a test by the government. They would be gathered together in a meeting hall. The government official would say, "We don't have anything against Christians, against your belief. Our problem is

with this man Watchman Nee. You just disassociate yourselves from him, and you'll be OK." Many did. Those who refused, died with him. Paul understood the reason why his coworker, Demas, left. You love, the Greek literally says nun aion, the now age. You love what's going on now, and you love the age more than you love the Lord's appearing. This will become the dividing line for all of us. Which love prevails? It's not just the love of the Lord; it's the love of the Lord's appearing.

For those of you who are new, let me tell you that there is such a thing as the full-time training in Anaheim. Dear recent college graduates come in increasing numbers; we have about 360 or 370, and they volunteer to give two years of their life to be trained. They get up at 6:00 in the morning, lights out at 10:30 at night. They wear uniforms. The brothers wear ties, and the sisters wear skirts that could almost sweep the floor, they're that long. They voluntarily place themselves under certain regulations. They have 24 hours off to rest, to do some human things, and to have some proper recreation. But one thing they're told is, "Don't go to a movie while you are in the training." I do believe the trainees love all of us who are serving them, so they love me, no question. But suppose I go to a post office one Monday afternoon next to which is a theater. As I'm coming out of the post office, five trainee brothers are coming out of the theater. I assure you, they do not love my appearing. "Brother Ron, we love you, the person, but your appearing now is so embarrassing." Thankfully, as far as I know, this has never happened, but it shows the difference.

We need to ask the Lord; we shouldn't just assume we have this kind of love. We should say, "Lord, be merciful to me. Dispense into me a love for Your appearing." I have to testify to you, forgetting age, I just long for the Lord to come back, for human government with all of its corruption to be abolished, for there to be a kingdom of righteousness, where there's no enmity, no partiality. I just long for this to happen. The means by which this happens will be the overcomers among the believers. In each of the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord calls for overcomers. The last four – Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea – those four churches will exist until the end of the age. The Lord is calling for overcomers from all of them.

Now I want to be very careful here. After considering this for more than 50 years, I must say faithfully and sincerely that the best opportunity I have and we have of being an overcomer is to be in the church life in the local churches. But I also sincerely believe that our dear brother Billy Graham was an overcomer. I believe he walked with the Lord in white. I believe he was faithful to what the Lord had given him, so we are by no means limiting this. We have no right to do this. Yet if I had stayed in the increasingly liberal and worldly United Presbyterian Church and continued being a minister there, then retired, I don't think I would be anywhere near ready for the Lord to come back. The first message is really not about the overcomers; it is about knowing the overcoming Christ. This is the reason why we start here. Christ Himself as the God-man in His humanity is a

victorious Christ. That's why we sang the hymn [#890],
“Hallelujah, Christ is Victor,/tell where'er you go,/ That
the Lord is still the conqu'ror,/ Over every foe.”

<< Week 1 - Day 4 >>

Verses to Enjoy

John 16:33: These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

Rom. 12:2a: And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind...

1 John 3:6: Everyone who abides in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.

Today's Reading

The really good news – I find the touching, encouraging, heart-warming news – is that the Lord is very good at reproducing Himself in those who are open for Him to do so. We cannot make ourselves victorious. If you really know the flesh, the self, and the natural life, if you're really honest before God about your life as a believer, I think we will all say, "We have failed too much." In my twenties, yes, there was the burning zeal: I'll be this, I'll be that. Then came the experiences of human life, and the Christian life and the church life show you can't be that. You can't even overcome someone in the express line who has more than 15 items in their basket. You're irritated by someone who has 17 items in their basket. That's why you've got to say something to the clerk about enforcing the sign. Or why we're bothered when we're in the left

turn lane with the red arrow ahead for left turns, and we're the eighth car in line, and we know we can make it when the arrow turns green if the reflexes of the first seven are quick enough, and of course, they're not, so by the time you're there it's not yellow, it's glaring red, and you're there for the next three minutes. In ourselves, we can be overcome by too many items in a basket, red arrows, so many things. Then the enemy comes in. Especially to those in middle age going from one crisis to another, and then going beyond middle age. The enemy comes in and says, "Just settle for the New Jerusalem. You'll never make it." Tonight, I want to tell him, "You're a liar." The overcoming Christ has the desire to reproduce Himself as the Overcomer in every one of us.

Let's say you prayed while you were waiting for the elevator. This is an opportunity to reign in life. Just say, "Lord Jesus, for the fulfillment of Your heart's desire to have the bride, make me an overcomer." What do you think He will say? Do you think He will say, "No. I want you to be defeated."? But who would pray? Why don't we just simply pray? Instead of worrying about it, why don't we simply pray? "Lord, reproduce Yourself in me." I believe that about 40 hours from now, when we all need to go back home, there will be a little more faith in us about the overcoming Christ producing overcomers. All He has to work with is people like us. That's all He has to work with: redeemed, forgiven sinners born of God who are now meeting in His name in the churches. Let's focus on Him and realize that the Person revealed now in the verses and on this outline, this is the overcoming Christ

who is calling for overcomers. Tomorrow we'll sing that hymn [#894], "Will you be an overcomer? Will you make this choice?"

Don't make a vow to say, "Lord, I vow to be an overcomer." Learn from some of us older ones. Stop making promises that are impossible to fulfill. Just say, "Lord, You do it. But I choose to become one. I choose to let you do it."

I. God wants to end this age and bring in the age of the kingdom; (God wants this.) for this great dispensational move, God must have the overcomers as His dispensational instrument.

When this age ends and there is a dispensational change, it will be the greatest change the earth has ever seen. The Lord will come with His overcoming army, defeat the armies at Armageddon, and abolish human government everywhere. No more elections. Pretty soon, the 2020 presidential election will begin. We're just recovering from the last one. Is every day to be about the next election? Stop! No human government, no money. If you care about climate change and you care about the environment, the curse will be released from nature; the desert will blossom. It's going to be a beautiful place, still in the old creation. It will be a monumental change.

II. Through their experience and enjoyment of Christ, the overcomers have an experiential knowledge of the overcoming Christ.

We want to know the overcoming Christ. To experience Him, that's mainly in our spirit; to enjoy Him, that's mainly with our soul. We will really know, and be one with, and adore, and praise, and love the victorious Christ. We need to realize that the Lord is the Overcomer, He is reproducing Himself and He wants us to know Him, experience Him, enjoy Him, and be constituted with Him so that we are the same as He is. This is the overcoming Christ.

Now we will see two kinds of overcomers in the writings of John.

III. In the writings of the apostle John, we have a revelation of the overcoming Christ.

A. is a quotation of John 16:33: *"These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace."*

We need to learn to live in Him and abide in Him. *"In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* The world in John's writings denotes mainly the Satanic system behind which lurks the mind of Satan. In Brother Nee's book, "Love Not the World," he talks about the mind behind the system. Behind the mainstream media, behind the educational system, behind every aspect of entertainment, behind all the different schools of thought concerning diet and exercise, it's all part of the world system. Satan has taken advantage of things we need for our human life that we must have in order to exist and has created a system to imprison all of us. At the end of I John in chapter 5 it

says the whole world lies in the evil one, like a patient anesthetized on an operating table. Take the example of spring break. A young man disappeared in the Gulf of Mexico. He went from one aspect of the Satanic system, his university, to another, the pleasure-loving aspect, and now he's gone.

God is Triune, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The world is versus the Father, Satan is versus the Son, the flesh is versus the Spirit. The apostle John said, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him." When He was about to die, He prayed for us. He said, "Father, I do not ask that You would them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of the hands of the evil one." The overcomers learn to live in the world but not be of the world and not be controlled by the Satanic mind operating behind the world system.

Right now, day after day, in the mainstream media and on the campuses is the battle for the mind of the young. Paul wrote in Romans, do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind. This is another decision for all of us, but especially for the young. What kind of mind will develop in you? Once you are in your middle 40s, it can still be changed, but the Lord has to use a very different method because it's harder now. Will you be conformed to this age? Sometimes I have question and response sessions. I don't call them answers, because I don't have very many answers. I can just give honest fellowship. Some ask about this whole gender

matter. I tell them, there's the law, same-sex marriage. There's all this going on about gender. This is the world. I'm not a social crusader. But I simply believe in God and in His Word. Male and female He created them. The point is, the battle is for the mind. If the enemy through the world controls your mind, you're finished, whether you know it or not. If Christ as the Spirit renews your mind, you're on your way to victory. Because your mind is the leading part of your soul, your mind will direct your whole inner being. We will have affliction in the world, no doubt about it. But He said, "Take courage, I have overcome the world." You can't, I can't; I just like to abide in the One who did.

1. In this verse the world refers to the physical realm, and Me refers to the divine and mystical realm of the pneumatic Christ.

2. Through faith and baptism we have entered into an organic union with the overcoming Christ.

When we baptize someone, we bury them figuratively by immersing them in water, then we raise them up, signifying resurrection. The reality of this is that you have passed out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. You are a new creation, bound for glory.

Now we're in 1 John, talking about the believers.

3. "Everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world." Notice that it says "everything."

That refers to our spirit. The regenerated spirit of the regenerated believer overcomes the world. Any time you are in your regenerated spirit, you are overcoming the world, because your regenerated spirit overcomes. It's begotten of God, it has the life of God, and it overcomes the world. The believers' divine birth with the divine life is the basic factor for such a victorious living. Christ our life is repeating His victorious life in us.

<< Week 1 - Day 5 >>

Verses to Enjoy

1 John 5:4-5: For everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world — our faith. And who is he who overcomes the world except him who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Rev. 5:5b: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals.

Today's Reading

4. *"This is the victory which has overcome the world – our faith."* Again, we are talking about all the believers overcoming the world. The regenerated believers have the capacity of the divine life to overcome the world, the powerful, Satanic world system. I can testify to you that although I am an American citizen, and quite aware of what was going on in 2016, a very unusual election season, with quite a choice in candidates, I was not drawn into it. I would not allow my soul to be drawn into it. I'm not of this party, I'm not that party. I vote for the throne. I cast my vote for the throne. Sovereign God, whomever You choose. Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 4, He can choose the lowest person to be king. If You want to do that, You are the Lord, and I am for You. I am not for this, not against that; I would not allow my being to be

sucked into the political world. We don't have to.

a. The regenerated believers have the capacity of the divine life to overcome the world, the powerful satanic world system.

b. Our faith brings us into the organic union with the Triune God and believes that Jesus is the Son of God so that we may be begotten of God and have the divine life, by which we are enabled to overcome the Satan-organized-and-usurped world.

Our faith brings us into the organic union with the Triune God and believes that Jesus is the Son of God so that we may be begotten of God and have the divine life, by which we are able to overcome the Satan-organized-and-usurped world. Everyone on earth is in this system. Those who are unaware of it, they have been usurped. The enemy knows what aspect of the world matches your kind of soul and interests and abilities. Satan will usurp and take control over people in various ways. I still don't understand why on a Saturday a man would want to spend a few hours in Ace Hardware looking at new tools. Well, that's his world. Barnes & Noble is where I would go, especially if there's a Starbucks adjacent to it. I would get my Caramel Macchiato, and then I would just browse. Not just go there, make a simple purchase, and leave, but just kind of be usurped for a period of time and not even know it. But we are enabled to overcome the Satan-organized-and-usurped world just by believing, and by knowing our regenerated spirit overcomes the world.

5. *“Who is he who overcomes the world except him who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”*

We declare that Jesus is the Son of God. Rarely does someone knock at my door, but about a week and a half ago someone was there. I opened the door, and there were two young women. I sensed who they were. I said, “Who do you represent?” and they told me their cult. Then, I didn’t slam the door; I just politely closed the door, but I said, “Jesus is Jehovah God come in the flesh. Bye.” We just confess this. We overcome the world by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is a god created by Jehovah, that He is not I Am, He is not Jehovah, He is a god created by the God. That is a heresy and that is the spirit of Antichrist. He who denies that Jesus is the Christ, that’s a spirit of Antichrist. I’m not going to argue with them. I’ll just tell them, “If you can right now confess that Jesus is Jehovah God come in the flesh, then I’ll help you to call on the Lord. Then we’ll baptize you, and you will come out of the kingdom of Satan and into the kingdom of God and meet with the church in Anaheim. But you don’t want to do that, so I won’t say have a good day, I won’t smile, and I won’t shake your hand. I would rather say, “Have a miserable day until you repent.” Because I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We all do.

a. *Such a believer is one who has been begotten of God and has received the divine life.*

b. *The divine life empowers the believer to overcome the*

evil world energized by Satan.

In this sense, from 1 John, all believers are overcomers. So that teaching by Dr. MacArthur is accurate. But then he and so many others go to Revelation 2 and 3 where the Lord is calling for overcomers, and MacArthur then teaches that that's every believer. If you are a believer, you are an overcomer. If we believe anything that's not true, in that matter we will eventually have a problem. That's one reason why – I'm just illustrating – when we were raising our three kids, we never taught them anything that wasn't true. There's no Easter bunny, there's no tooth fairy, and there's no Santa Claus. We're not going to lie to you. We just want you to believe what's true. If you want to change your mind later, that's your decision as a grownup. It makes a difference if you think, Ron Kangas doesn't have a Ph.D.; this other man has a Ph.D., and he's published all of these books. I don't care. I'm not in competition with him. I'm just speaking the truth. I want to believe I'm already an overcomer. I don't like the thought that I might not be an overcomer, that I might not be in the kingdom, and that I might be disciplined for 1,000 years. I don't like that, so I won't hear it. I thank the Lord for His mercy to me. This is just a fact. There's no boasting here on my part. I won a theological prize at Princeton while I was a student, the Outstanding Student Theologian. I was well-read and well-learned in so many things. I came into the Lord's Recovery and got detoxified by the truth. I just began to measure everything by the pure Word of God. I then had the feeling to drop this, and to drop that. When the

kingdom truth came, it had the effect of stirring up a seeking that has been governing me for 51½ years. There are believers who are overcomers, and they will receive the kingdom as a reward. All believers, all children of God, who are born of God, have eternal life. They will never perish. They will be the New Jerusalem. But God the Father in His wisdom has set up the kingdom as a reward to be an incentive for us to live an overcoming life. That's what we have in Revelation. We begin with Christ.

B. "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome."

1. The lion is a symbol of Christ, portraying Him as a strong fighter against the enemy, as prophesied in Genesis 49:8-9.

In Revelation, He's called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Then we see there's a Lamb on the throne. The Lamb is for redemption, and the Lion is for defeating the enemy. We need to know the Lion-Christ. We need to let the Lion roar. You know the battle on the earth now is between two lions. In 1 Peter the Lord warns about Satan being a roaring lion walking about seeking whom to devour. He's a roaring lion; he makes a lot of noise. Go ahead, enemy, roar. My Savior is the victorious Lion on the throne. That Lion destroyed you on the cross. You think you are roaring. Actually, you are only going, "Meow." You're a wimp. You're defeated. Jesus the Lion is the overcomer! We're not done yet. Study those two verses from Genesis 49 in the Recovery Version with the footnotes. You will

see that this Lion is taking His prey up to the high place in His ascension, and mysteriously, He's also the Lioness producing lion cubs. We're a bunch of lion cubs, because the Lion is in our spirit. Sisters, don't think this is just a man thing. It's the seed of the woman that will crush the serpent. It's the woman that brings forth the man-child.

We have this Lion who is on the throne in our spirit as the life-giving Spirit.

2. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Christ overcame and defeated the rebellious Satan, the enemy of God, and as the redeeming Lamb, He took away the sin of fallen man, thereby removing the hindrances to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

The Bible is marvelous. All these symbols converge in Christ. He's on the cross, and He's the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world for us. He's also the Lion destroying the devil to deal with the enemy. This Christ is for us. We know from Hebrews 7:25 that He lives always to intercede for us that we would be saved to the uttermost. He wants to produce on the earth lion cubs that become victorious lions just like Him. Overcomers are lions. We don't roar; we praise. We fight by praising the Lion-Lamb. Praise the Victor! Praise the devil-destroying Lion! Now He's reproducing Himself by living in us.

<< Week 1 - Day 6 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 3:21: He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev. 17:14: These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, *will also overcome them.*

Matt. 7:21: Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heaven.

Today's Reading

C. "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne."

The point here is, He overcame. I don't know anything about boxing. Let's use a 15-round heavyweight fight as a theoretical illustration. I get in the fight, and I'm knocked out in the first minute of the first round. The Lord goes all 15 rounds, is never knocked down, and He knocks out the enemy. He waited to the fifteenth round to fully expose the enemy. When it was time to deal with him, He didn't have to use that much power. Our Christ is

victorious. You have the victorious Christ residing in your regenerated spirit. He overcame, and now He is sitting with the Father on His throne. He's promising to you that if you overcome, you will sit with Him on His throne. This is a promise made to a degraded recovered church, Laodicea.

1. Here to overcome is to overcome the lukewarmness and pride of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in.

2. To sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer, that he may participate in the Lord's authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the earth in the coming kingdom.

I repeat, the coming kingdom is not for all the believers. It is for the overcomers. In Matthew 22, the Lord told a parable about the wedding feast. A man came into the wedding feast, and someone responsible asked him, "How did you get in here without a wedding garment? Remove him to outer darkness." Some falsely teach the one without a wedding garment is an unbeliever. No. It's the wedding garment, not the garment in Luke 15. All believers have the garment in Luke 15, the garment of righteousness. But in Revelation 7 there is something called the bridal garment. The bride has a garment; that means she is prepared by living out Christ and expressing Him. So many believers, by the millions, have been taught, "No problem. You die defeated, you die in

your sins, it's OK, death solves all problems. When you are resurrected, you're just going to go into the wedding feast."

Read Matthew 25. Only the prudent virgins went in, not the foolish ones. Only the ones who used the talents entered in, not everyone who had a talent. The kingdom is for the overcomers. Now we realize, this is a word of righteousness. This is not a nice, easy, sugar-coated truth. Some don't want to hear it. Some react with the thought, I don't agree with it. Okay, that's your initial reflex. Re-read the Word with an open mind, an open heart, and an exercised spirit. Ask the Lord. I'll be able to say at least when I stand before the Son of Man, "I'm innocent of your blood." We told you the truth. The Lord needs overcomers, believers who as soon as they know the truth consecrate themselves. They are a voluntary offering in the day of His warfare mentioned in Psalm 110. They give themselves for Christ the Overcomer to reproduce Himself in them, and they learn with their companions to live an overcoming life, not to be special but to be normal.

This refers to the overcoming army at Christ's return.

D. "These (the Antichrist's army) will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him (that will be the bridal army of Revelation 19), the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them." When the Lord comes back, He will be the overcomer. He will overcome the enemy, Antichrist and his army, but He

won't be alone. He will be with His overcoming bride which is now His army. They have been called, like all believers, but they were chosen (Matthew 22 says many are called, few are chosen), and they were faithful. Called, chosen, and faithful. You don't have to be super-powerful, you don't have to be special; just be faithful. Every once in a while, I am touched by the Lord's tenderness. I make my heart known to Him, and I offer a prayer to Him: "Lord, please grant me the mercy to be faithful unto the end." The Bible says, "good and faithful" servant, not good and gifted, capable, eloquent, brilliant servant. It says, faithful servant.

1. Christ will come as a fighting General with the overcoming believers as His army to fight against Antichrist and the kings under him with their armies at Armageddon.

2. In 17:14 chosen is mentioned after called; to be called is to be saved, whereas to be chosen is to be approved by the Lord by virtue of an overcoming life.

In Matthew 7:21 and 22, the Lord said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power?" Maybe they would say, we were TV evangelists, we built up a megachurch, I did this, I did that. The Lord will say, "I don't know you. I don't

recognize you. Workers of lawlessness.” There’s such a thing among Christian workers. This put a holy fear in me. I cried out to the Lord in the fall of 1966, “Lord show me what this verse means.” I want to avoid at all costs standing before you and saying, I helped in the training, I helped edit a journal, I did this, I did that. The Lord would say, “I don’t know you. All you did was lawless. Here’s someone who served on ushering, here’s someone who cared for the children, here’s someone who helped maintain the meeting hall, here’s an ordinary brother, here’s an ordinary sister who never did any of those things, but they’re in the kingdom with Me because they were faithful in doing the will of the Father.”

God’s people deserve to know the truth, but we know from 2 Timothy that Paul says the time will come when they will not tolerate healthy teaching. That’s up to them, but they will heap up teachers, because they’ve got itching ears. No, tell me we’ll all be raptured, we’ll all be the bride, we’ll all be in the kingdom, we’ll all be overcomers. I can’t tell you that because that’s not the truth. Do you want to hire someone who will give you what you want to hear? Just join the clergy-laity system; the paid professionals will speak what you want to hear, otherwise you will fire them. By the Lord’s mercy, I don’t please man, I don’t fear man, I don’t want the praise of man, and I don’t need your money. On that day, I just want to hear from the Lord, “Well done.” I believe with all of us it’s the same.

IV. The overcomers are produced by the overcoming Christ

as the sevenfold intensified Spirit. That's how they are produced. I woke up one day about 20 years ago. I'm hearing all these marvelous things, and I accept them, but that's it. Then the Lord impressed me, why don't you pray about them? Why don't you ask the Lord? I heard a message on being saved in life, so I said, "Lord, save me in life today. Sanctify me, renew me, transform me, and conform me. Lord, grow in me. Lord, make me an overcomer. Reproduce Yourself in me." These simple, short prayers show our cooperation with the Lord.

IV. continues: and they are burdened for the building up of the Body of Christ as the preparation of the bride of Christ. They are burdened for that. Forgive me if I'm too much. I ask the Lord to cover me, but I want to bear witness to you. This is the testimony of the Lord's mercy, absolutely, but I can testify to you that I live and breathe for the building up of the Body of Christ as the preparation of the bride of Christ. This is why I am still here. This is why the Lord didn't take me two years ago when He took someone else. This is why he gave me a new start, because there is more to be released. More need to seek the Lord in response to His mercy. Lord, make us overcomers, not only for us to get the reward but for You to have the church, for You to have the new man, and for You to have the bride. All we have to do is ask. He will respond. He will do all the work, and we will be joyful, rejoicing, praising, overcoming believers due to the glorious work of the overcoming Christ.

Message Two Outline

Conquering the Satanic Chaos and Being Victorious Over the Attack of Death

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:8-11; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:24;
Phil. 3:10-11

- I. The overcomers conquer the satanic chaos in the old creation and carry out the divine economy for the new creation—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph.1:10; 3:10; 2 Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15:
 - A. Satan, the devil, is the source and element of the evil chaos—Matt. 16:23; Rev. 2:9-10; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8
 - B. God is the divine economy, and He has come into us as an administration, arrangement, and plan to put everything in order—Eph. 1:10; 3:10.
 - C. In the Bible and in our experience, the satanic chaos always goes along with the divine economy.
 - D. The overcomers are not delivered out of the satanic chaos; instead, they conquer the destructive satanic chaos and triumph in the constructive divine economy—1 Tim. 1:3-4, 19-20; 4:1-2; Titus 3:10; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17-18; 4:8
 1. The overcomers suffer the chaos, but instead of being disappointed or discouraged, they are strengthened and enabled to stand for and live out the divine

economy—vv. 10, 14-18; 2:15.

2. The overcomers conquer the chaos by the processed and consummated Triune God as the all-sufficient grace—1:9; 4:22.
- II. The overcomers are victorious over the attack of death—Rev. 2:8-11; Matt. 16:18; Heb. 2:14-15; 2 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 3:10-11:
- A. Matthew 16:18 shows us from what source the attack upon the church will come—"the gates of Hades," that is, of death:
 1. Satan's special object today is to spread death within the church.
 2. Satan's greatest fear with regard to the church is her resistance to his power of death.
 - B. The church is an entity absolutely in resurrection—1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:6:
 1. The church is a new creation created in Christ's resurrection and by the resurrected Christ; therefore, the church is "resurrectiononly"—Gal. 6:15.
 2. "God sees the church as a being that can endure death" (Watchman Nee).
 - C. If we would overcome the attack of death, we need to know Christ in a particular way:
 1. We need to know Christ as the First and the Last—the ever-existing, unchanging One—Rev. 2:8.
 2. We need to know Christ as the One who became dead and lived again—as the One who is resurrection—v. 8; 1:18; John 11:25;

Acts 2:24

- D. The overcomers are faithful unto death and will not be hurt by the second death—Rev. 2:10b, 11b; 12:11.
- E. To those who overcome the attack of death Christ will give the crown of life— 2:10b:
 - 1. The crown of life denotes the overcoming strength that is the power of the resurrection life—Phil. 3:10.
 - 2. The crown of life signifies that those who overcome the attack of death have attained to the out-resurrection from the dead—v. 11.

Message Two

Conquering the Satanic Chaos and Being Victorious Over the Attack of Death

(Hymn #981)

<< **Week 2 – Day 1** >>

Verses to Enjoy

Eph. 3:10-11: In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord...

Matt. 6:9-10: You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

Today's Reading

I'd like to review the main points from message one last night. Especially if you just came this morning and were not here last night, we'd like you to be brought into the thought, the burden, and the direction of this set of messages.

God's Eternal Purpose and the Enemy's Opposition

The eternal God has an eternal purpose. Paul clearly spoke of this in Ephesians 3:11, and he connected God's eternal purpose with the church mentioned in verse 10. In that verse, Paul said that God will make His multifarious, or many-sided, wisdom known through the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. Those principalities and powers are mainly the evil spirits who followed Satan in his rebellion and are part of his kingdom. God's purpose is to express Himself in Christ corporately through the church and then through this built-up church to manifest His wisdom to shame His enemy.

God formed this eternal purpose before He created anything. There was no universe, no space, no time, and I say this with respect: even the great physicist who recently passed away now realizes there is a God, and there are not laws that exist all by themselves when nothing is there. So God created the universe, our solar system, and our planet. He placed on the earth human beings in His image to express Him, and who were given the responsibility of exercising dominion and representing Him. And God's desire since He created us in His image is that by the blessing to be fruitful and multiply, the earth would be filled with human beings bearing the image of God and expressing Him. But of course that didn't happen, because we will see a battle that had already been raging long before the earth was recovered in Genesis 1. There was an enemy with a will in rebellion against God's will, and with a kingdom

opposed to God's kingdom, and that evil one injected himself as sin into the human race producing death, darkness, division, enmity, and eventually a world system designed by the enemy.

We have to have food, clothes, housing. We have to have some security, means of transportation. We need to have something to bring an element of joy, a way to get an education. All these are human needs, but the enemy has made a system of everything. Once I heard a story of a woman who was able to flee from a communist country to the United States. If you've ever been in a store where communism was rampant, you would find just one item for everything – one kind of soup, one kind of soap, one kind of toothpaste. When this woman first came into a huge supermarket in the United States, she just couldn't handle the multitude of everything. On the earth and in the heavenly realm, much opposition is going on against God's eternal purpose. Nevertheless, God's plan is to carry out His purpose gradually and progressively in a series of ages: the age from creation until the giving of the law, the age of law until John the Baptist opened up the way for Christ to come to inaugurate the age of grace, the age of the church, the age of mystery, the age in which we live. The remaining age will be the kingdom of a thousand years. After that age, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and we do not know what time and space will be like – we will be in eternity.

The Principle of Prayer

God is advancing. Despite Satan's opposition, He is

always advancing. But He advances according to a principle that He Himself set, although it requires God voluntarily limiting Himself. When He created the universe, He simply spoke. He didn't have to consult with any beings; actually, there weren't any beings. But now, as He is working out His purpose with man created by Him for this, He will work to the extent to which we are one with Him and cooperate with Him. That is the principle of prayer. Little children often ask rather deep philosophical questions, such as "Daddy, why do we need to pray when God already knows everything and He has the power to do whatever He wants?" We need to know the reason that we pray. It is not to inform God about something He already knows. Rather, the principle is this: God has a will, a purpose, an intention, a desire, and a plan to work out on the earth now; the extent to which He can do this depends on the cooperation of His people. His people cooperate first by praying, and their prayer is an expression of their oneness with God and their agreement with God's will.

We know that in 1989, almost suddenly, the Soviet Union collapsed and all the republics became separate countries. But maybe many of us do not know that several years prior to that, a group of brothers in Seattle were burdened for the Russian-speaking world. They received from the Lord a leading and a burden concerning the opening up of the Russian-speaking world to the gospel and to the flow of life and truth in the Lord's recovery. Those brothers prayed a number of days a week for years. For my own learning, not long ago I asked one of them,

our brother Joel Kennan, what some of their experiences were. He shared that they brought matter after matter to the Lord. “Lord, how do You feel about this person still being in power? Do You want him to remain in power? Do You want to make a change? We feel, Lord, that You want to change.” The collapse of the Soviet Union seemed sudden and shocking to a lot of people. I remember one professor when I was taking some graduate courses at the University of Texas at Dallas. She was a Holocaust survivor, but she was not a believer. She was from Hungary, spared extermination in an amazing way. She taught a course for graduate students at that time. I remember that she expressed her amazement over this collapse. Well, God on the throne had a desire to open up the Russian-speaking world, but He didn’t just do it as God. He wanted to make His desire known through fellowship with certain ones among His people who were one with Him, and they turned that into prayer. Then, the Lord carried out His will by answering their prayer, which was the expression of His will.

The Overcomers as Victors

Because God is not acting unilaterally in this age, because He needs the cooperation of His believers, and because very few even know the principle of prayer or know how to cooperate, He has been held up. At least from a human point of view, it seems He has been held up. So in every age He has raised up certain ones among His people. They were not superior, they were not super, but out of their love for the Lord they presented themselves to Him and cooperated with Him to do

whatever He wanted. As an example, before the Lord Jesus was born in Jerusalem, some elderly believers were praying for the coming of the Messiah; they were praying. Whenever the Lord is making a move, especially to turn the age, He needs a particular kind of cooperation among His people. And that cooperation is rendered by a group of believers the Bible calls “the overcomers.” Some of the young brothers here who are wearing Nike shoes might be interested to know that the word Nike is the English version of the Greek *níki* (nee'-kay), meaning victor or victory. And the verb for overcome is *nikáō* (nik-ah'-o), which means to conquer, to be victorious. So an overcomer is a believer living in fellowship with the Lord and relying on the Lord's grace, who conquers whatever needs to be conquered and defeats whatever needs to be defeated so that God can cause His will to be done on earth.

This brings us to the general subject for this conference: *The Characteristics of the Overcomers as the Dispensational Instrument to Turn the Age.*

A dispensational instrument means a human channel through which the Lord can move to make a turn. The next turn will be the end of the age of grace and the coming of the age of righteousness, of the kingdom. I say in purity and sincerity that I believe there will be such a thing – I believe the Lord will return as the King of glory fulfilling Psalm 24: “The King of glory will come in” (v. 7b). I believe what is mentioned in Matthew, that He will establish His throne in Jerusalem. I believe the

significance of the vision in Daniel 2: a stone cut without hands will strike the toes of the huge image signifying human government - human government will be abolished, money will be abolished, the environment will be released from corruption. It will be a beautiful time. This will happen. But it won't just happen because the Lord says, "Okay, let's do it now. I'm God - I do what I want, the way I want it, when I want it." That is not how He is operating. That is why the Lord told us to pray for the kingdom to come.

<< Week 2 – Day 2 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 2:10: ...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev. 3:21: He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Matt. 7:8: For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

Today's Reading

The overcomers - the believers who are one with the Lord and receive grace to cooperate with Him, they are the victors in two ways. They, by the power of Christ's resurrection life conquer what has been hindering God. So here's something that has been hindering God: the clergy-laity system - the whole system of having this class distinction among believers, the seminaries (I attended one) and the Bible schools that systematize this. So, what you have in organized Christianity is a system of professionals. I remember when my aging parents were finishing their course as believers and I was caring for them. A few of us were there and a minister from the community was there. I wasn't offended by him, I honored him as a brother but I understood his psychology. He prayed like a professional. He was the one

who did the praying, and once he has prayed, that's it. This system, this one thing has hindered the building up of the Body of Christ for two thousand years. The overcomers realize this. They re-study the New Testament and they read a verse like 1 Corinthians 14:26: "Each one has." They read about exhorting one another in mutuality and they will take the step of learning to have a church life free from clergy-laity, free from any paid professionals doing the work, and in which all the members can function according to their portion. This is just one illustration.

Two Aspects of Overcoming

We pointed out last night that there are two aspects of overcoming. We must know the difference between them. If we merge them, we will make a serious mistake, and that serious mistake may have the effect of stunting our growth in life our whole life, making us ineligible to reign with Christ in His kingdom. The Lord Jesus said in John 16:33, "I have overcome the world." He mentions the world, the satanic system in which every aspect of human life is systematized. The enemy usurps humans because we need food, we need clothing, we need transportation. But today, among those shopping for a car, who is simply looking for a good means of transportation? There is so much else involved. But the Lord said, "In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Then John the apostle who recorded those words said in 1 John, "Everything that has been begotten of God

overcomes the world” (5:4a). That is our regenerated human spirit. When we are in our regenerated spirit mingled with the Lord Spirit, we overcome the world. “This is the victory,” he went on to say, “which has overcome the world – our faith” (v. 4b). In this sense, every believer and any believer, can be and actually is an overcomer. We are overcoming the world. That is the emphasis in 1 John.

However, in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus Himself is speaking to seven local churches representing the whole future history of the church. At the end of each speaking He calls for overcomers. Why would He call for overcomers in this particular context if everyone’s an overcomer? There’s degradation in most of the churches. Something in the churches is hindering the Lord from building His church. The Lord identifies what it is, and then speaks to the one who overcomes, to the one who is victorious. The name of one of these overcomers in Revelation 2 is Antipas. Whether that was his birth name or a symbolic name, the name Antipas means against all, against everything. He existed approximately during the time of Constantine the Great, when mixture was taking place, when the enemy changed his strategy. First he tried to destroy the church by persecution and martyrdom, but he found out that the more he killed, the more believers were produced. So he changed his strategy – he decided to marry the church and most fell for it. “Look, why can’t we just get along? Why don’t you just marry the Roman Empire and you be the official church? We’ll tax the people – that’s how we’ll support the clergy.

We'll let you build these beautiful places. No more persecution." And here comes Antipas, seeing through the whole façade and opposing everything. When we talk about the overcomers in this conference, we are emphasizing the overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3, where the Lord Himself is calling for them.

Christ as the Real Overcomer

The other main point we saw is that the Overcomer, the real Overcomer is Christ Himself. In Revelation 3:21 He said, "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne." He did not say, "All of you who believe, you will be on the throne in the kingdom." He did not say that. This was Jesus speaking. But He said, "I overcame." Then in Revelation 5, the apostle John was crying because no one was worthy to open the scroll. You know things are serious when the apostles are bawling, not knowing what to do. An angel came to him and said, "Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah... has overcome" (v. 5. He's on the throne! Our Lord Jesus is the overcoming Lion as well as the redeeming Lamb, and He is producing overcomers.

Simply Asking in Prayer

Here I would inject something concerning the life and truth in the Lord's recovery. The truth as revealed in the Scriptures and as properly opened up by faithful teachers and by the ministry of the age is profound. It's high. We could spend lifetimes seeking it and not absorb everything. But the life practices are simple – as simple

as drinking a glass of water, as simple as eating the bread of life, as simple as breathing in the Holy Spirit, as simple as offering a direct prayer like the blind man Bartimaeus did. He heard the Lord was coming. He was by the side of the road, crying out. They tried to stop him, but he wouldn't stop. The Lord paused right in front of him and asked him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." He did not give a long religious prayer: "Lord, You are omnipotent and omniscient. You are well able to do all of these things. You are the Son of David. You are the fulfillment of prophecies, and You can do all of this." The Lord spoke directly to him, and he spoke directly to the Lord, and he got an answer. Why don't we learn to pray like this? The Lord is a living, present Person.

There have been a few times – this is not a method, I would never use this or anything as a method – when there is rather significant fellowship taking place and someone is seeking supply and fellowship, a brother would pause and ask, "What would you like the Lord to do for you? Why don't you just ask Him?" If you would like to be an overcomer, why don't you just ask Him? He wants overcomers. He needs overcomers. If you would say, "Lord Jesus, make me an overcomer to fulfill Your purpose," what do you think He will say? Do you think He will say, "No, I'm happy when you're defeated, when you're overcome?" No. Out of the hundreds and hundreds of millions of believers on the earth right now, how many have asked the Lord to make them an overcomer for His purpose? It's so simple. That's why I was touched

especially by one sister's testimony last night: I just ask. I don't have to promise I will do this, I will be that, from now on I won't do that, from now on I will do this – promises you probably won't be able to keep until bedtime tonight if you are like me, and I think you are. Simply ask the Lord. He wants to reproduce Himself in us and live in us His overcoming life. We just need to ask Him and open to Him.

<< Week 2 – Day 3 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rom. 8:37: But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.

Gal. 2:20: I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me....who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

2 Cor. 5:14: “..the love of Christ constrains us..”

Today's Reading

More Than Conquer in All These Things

Now I want to mention one other matter and then we'll go through the outline. This is something fresh. I believe this will be quite encouraging to you. It's from Romans 8. I want to give some background so I will start with verse 34: “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter.’” (vv. 34-36). Now listen to this, verse 37: “But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.” Paul could have just said, “in all these things we more than conquer.” He could have just said

that. He could have said, “in all these things we more than conquer through the supreme power of God.” But He did not say that. He said “in all these things,” indicating as we’ll see when we come to the outline, that the Lord is not going to pluck us out of every difficult situation. He’s not going to do that, that’s not the way the overcomers function, they’re in it. Paul ended his life as an overcomer, but he was martyred. How Nero put him to death, we don’t know, but we know Nero crucified some and then made torches, set them on fire.

Eventually in our experience our God will not be the God of prevention. He’ll be the God of victory and the God of resurrection “*in*” *all these things*. There’s a dear sister some of us know who contracted a very virulent form of leukemia in December. She had been struggling with this for months. There was prayer upon prayer which allowed the Lord to advance. They needed a bone marrow donor that would be a close match. One was finally located in Israel. The marrow was brought to southern California, the transplant was successful, and now we’re praying it will work out. Here is a sister in her 50’s conquering “*in*” this thing. “*In*” this thing.

This verse is fresh to me this morning. “More than conquer.” Those who really know Greek, they’ll know whether or not Paul originated this word. I just remember fragments. Paul used this word *hupernikaó* (hoop-er-nik-ah'-o): to super-overcome, to super-conquer. So we have to make sense in English- “more than conquer.” Not just barely making it, “more” than conquer.

And what is the motivating factor? It's His love- "through Him who loved us." There is something of what we're experiencing personally – the Lord's love for us – that makes us invincible in the divine life.

Love as the Motivating Factor

I feel to mention a certain line of thought again for your supply and your encouragement, and as a cherishing for you all. We all know and believe John 3:16: "God so loved the world." The world here is the whole human race. We are included in there. We may think, "So, I guess He loves me, because I'm part of the human race," but it's kind of remote, isn't it? Then we may be familiar with Paul's word in Ephesians 5: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (v. 25b). Now the scope is narrower. As believers we are part of the church, so we can define ourselves as an object of love. But, it's still remote. Then we have Paul. Let's remember that Acts tells us that he was breathing out murder against the believers. The devil was the murderer from the beginning, so Paul was a devil-man. He invaded houses where there were home meetings, broke up the meetings, and forced both brothers and sisters to appear before the Sanhedrin, the court, and he voted for the death penalty. This was the kind of person he was. In his writing he called himself the greatest sinner, probably because he was. Then he said, "The Lord had mercy on me" (1 Timothy 1:15-16). Eventually he wrote an epistle to a group of churches in Galatia, and he said, "I am crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up *for me*" (Galatians 2:20). This is what we need. Only the Lord knows. I don't seek to be the heart-knower. He knows our need right now – right now – to realize He loves each one of us personally and directly, and He died for you and He bore your sins.

Some of you have heard this testimony before, but others haven't, and I believe it will help them. When I was 19, as a result of something that happened, I not only gave up on love, I also decided that there really was no such thing, not in reality. Because once anyone gets to really know me the love disappears right away. You love the concept, you love the image, you love your dream. Once you see the real person, the love is gone. Therefore, I decided okay, I'll settle for respect, not love. Then almost eight years later, I would be in a church meeting in Los Angeles, and someone would call a hymn I never knew existed. I sang it for the first time in that meeting. "Come and rejoice with me! I, once so sick at heart, have met with One who knows my case, and knows the healing art." But the stanza that melted me, changed me goes, "Come and rejoice with me! For I have found a Friend who knows my heart's most secret depths, yet loves me without end."

This is what Paul experienced, he knew the Lord loved him. John also learned this, so he told us in his first epistle chapter 4 verse 19, "We love because He first loved us." Overcomers are those who know the Lord loves them. This is what enables them to more than conquer. They

are not super-spiritual, they are not another kind of species of believers, they are not better, not more spiritual than others, they do not know the Bible more than others, none of this is necessary. But they are motivated by what Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 5: “the love of Christ constrains us” (v. 14). It’s like a strong tide flowing in, not a destructive tsunami, but a flood-tide carrying you. You are carried on by a tide of love. Now you can live a life that was impossible, bear what is unbearable, do what is undoable, because this is the motivating factor.

This aspect of overcoming is fully illustrated in Song of Songs. We may see this in an upcoming message. When the Lord begins to speak to her, because He loved her and she knew He loved her, He could say anything and she wouldn’t be offended. So He said, “Oh my love, you’re a horse. You’re a stallion. You are so strong in your will and so energetic. Oh my love, you are this strong-souled woman.” The Lord knows how to deal with strong women. He does not deal with them by pressing them down and striking them down. He knows the secret weapon of the divine love will conquer all of us. Then not too long afterwards He comes again and says, “How are you doing, lily?” She responds, “I’m just a lily trusting God.” Eventually she becomes the Shulammite, His warrior – lovely as Tirzah, beautiful as Jerusalem, terrifying as an army.

If nothing else happens during this message, or during the day, or tomorrow, if nothing else happens, let the

Lord love you again. Right now as I am speaking this, I am letting the Lord do this. I need this. We more than overcome in these things through the One who loved us. The mention of “these things” brings us to message 2 with this word “chaos.”

<< Week 2 – Day 4 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Isa. 45:18: For thus says Jehovah, who created the heavens – He is the God Who formed the earth and made it; He established it; He did not create it waste, but He formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah and there is no one else.

Matt. 16:18: And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Phil. 3:10-11: To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.

Today's Reading

The title of the message is: *Conquering the Satanic Chaos and Being Victorious over the Attack of Death.*

There is a wonderful ministry book entitled “The Satanic Chaos in the Old Creation and the Divine Economy for the New Creation.” When Brother Lee gave those messages in 1992 I was comforted as soon as I saw the subject, because I had some realization of chaos on various levels. There is something called satanic chaos which entered the universe. Do you know when this

happened? It was in the second verse in the whole Bible. I admit that our understanding of Genesis 1:2 is not the most popular understanding, but God is a God of order, of beauty, and of harmony. In Job 38:4-8, when the morning stars, the sons of God – that is, the angels who were created before other things were created – saw the beauty of God’s creation, of the heavens and the earth, they sang for joy. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The second verse says, “But the earth became waste and emptiness, and darkness was on the surface of the deep.” This is where we differ. Some would say, “Oh, that kind of formless mass – that was the first stage of God’s creation.” That is not the way He works, He creates by speaking. There’s nothing, He wants something, He speaks. Isaiah 45:18 tells us that God did not create the earth a waste. Therefore, something had happened, probably billions of years ago, where an archangel and certain angelic beings rebelled, and these beings became the evil spirits and pre-Adamic beings on the earth with spirits. There was a rebellion against God, led by Lucifer- read Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Then God came in to judge that.

In Genesis 1:1 there was order, then in 1:2 there was chaos. Since then, there has been a battle with chaos for who knows how long. Darkness was upon the surface of the deep. In the Bible, the unruly seas are a symbol of chaos. Isn’t it significant, then, that in Revelation 21 we are told that there is no more sea? No more sea! All the chaos is gone. At the great white throne, every negative thing in the universe will be dealt with. All the

unbelievers, all the demons, the devil himself, the antichrist, the false prophet, and then as Paul said, the last enemy, finally, the last enemy will be dealt with. The last enemy is death. However, outwardly and physically, we are all still living in the old creation, which is subject to satanic chaos. Don't you have the feeling that in the last eight or ten years there has been more chaos in American society than there had been for a long time? I can only compare this with the 1960's, but it far surpasses that. It will get worse. The Lord Himself said, "For just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37). It will get worse. The particular word to describe the age of Noah was violence. Violence. Is not our culture largely a culture of violence? What kind of games are the children playing? There is violence here and there, there is violence in just the way people talk to each other, what they call each other.

The Overcomers Conquering and Being Victorious Through the Resurrection Life

We are in the satanic chaos outwardly, but overcomers conquer it. They more than conquer in these things. This is one of their characteristics. They are not exempt from it. We are not exempt from the common sufferings of illness and death and grief and so many things. The difference is: in these things, through the One who loves us, we not only conquer, we more than conquer. And we have the assurance that nothing will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. This counteracts the fear the enemy is constantly trying to inject into us.

The overcomers are also victorious over the attack of death. As soon as the Lord heard Peter confess, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” He said, “upon this rock” – this revelation concerning Me – “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:16, 18a). Then immediately He said, “The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (v. 18b). This indicates that there will be great resistance from the enemy to the building up of the church, because the building up of the church is the producing of the one new man, a corporate God-man expressing God and representing God, to deal with the enemy. When the Lord said that the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church, He was indicating at least two things. Firstly, there will be the attack. The enemy’s ultimate weapon is death – not just physical death, but all kinds of death. But secondly, the gates of Hades will not prevail. Well, what can conquer death when it attacks? Resurrection life – death cannot hold the resurrection life. This, we will see, is another characteristic of the overcomers. They learn how to experience, enjoy, apply, and live the resurrection life of Christ. I say again that they are not special, they are not superior, but they are willing to learn, they are open to learn.

The Divine Dispensing vs. the Satanic Chaos

We have two points in the outline, a rather short outline, devoted to these matters.

I. The overcomers conquer the satanic chaos in the old creation and carry out the divine economy for the new creation.

I will define this word “economy” shortly, but in this point two things are going on. The first is the satanic chaos. The enemy is trying to bring in disorder, enmity, hostility, war, confusion, deception, darkness, dehumanizing things, and these will increase. The second is God’s economy, which is His plan and arrangement to dispense Himself into us as life, our life supply, and every positive thing, to make us the church as His counterpart, His corporate expression. In the midst of the enemy’s trying to bring in confusion and chaos, we are under the divine dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God, receiving His dispensing right in the midst of any and every situation. And we bear a collective testimony, the testimony of the Body.

We have been through every kind of situation: imprisonment, slander, persecution, death, betrayal, all kinds of things. The members of the Body through the ages, in this satanic chaos, are experiencing the divine dispensing of the Triune God all the time. This is God’s economy, and He is defeating the enemy while he is trying to attack us. We need to know this. It’s very much in my heart to help the full-time trainees know what it’s like day by day to live in God’s economy. Do you know how to relate to the Lord according to the divine economy? When you are trying to have a time alone with the Lord, do you know what He wants to do? The enemy may be lying to you and saying, “God is not happy with you. He’s going to deal with you. He’s going to judge you. You better stay away.” That’s a lie. God the Father would say, “I want you to come to Me so I can give Myself to you

in My Son as the Spirit. I want you to come to Me so that you can enjoy Me and learn how enjoyable a Being I am.” One of the Psalmists wrote, “In Your presence is fullness of joy” (16:11). Another wrote, “You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures” (36:8). This takes us out of religion, out of formality. I am altogether for the Holy Word for Morning Revival, I am thankful for this provision, but that is not an end in itself. That is a means to touch the dispensing God and to receive from Him the grace and life supply you need for this new day. I remember reading one of brother Lee’s prayers in a life-study message, which became my lifelong prayer – “Lord, grant me today’s portion of Your all-sufficient grace.” This is dispensing.

Conquering the Chaos Even in the Church

Now let’s cover the sub-points.

A. Satan, the devil, is the source and element of the evil chaos.

This can be true even in the church. Don’t be idealistic about the church. I share with the trainees the difference between a visionary and an idealist. An idealist has a concept of a perfect, ideal church. They’re looking for it and they think they’ve found it. Then after a period of time they become disillusioned and cynical. A visionary sees the vision that is in the Word and that is being worked out with ordinary believers like us. Imagine if your local church was like the church in Corinth. You’ve got sects within the church: I’m of Paul. No, Peter. No, Apollos. I am of Christ. Then there are all kinds of confusion about eating meat, a certain kind of meat that

had been sacrificed to idols. Brothers are taking others to court. Paul is being bombarded with questions about marriage and courtship. Some are drunk at the Lord's Table – they have a love feast first, the wealthy bring their gourmet food and their fine wine, but the poor don't have anything to eat, and some are drunk by the time they're having the Lord's Table meeting. There's a mess concerning the gifts of the Spirit. To top it off, some, because they are Greeks, don't really believe in resurrection. I was stunned when Brother Lee opened the life-study of 1 Corinthians and he said Corinth is a typical local church – not normal, but typical.

I look back on 51 1/2 years and I've seen everything. In the late 1960's, a number from the hippie background got saved. They came to the church meetings, hair down to their shoulders, beard down to their chest, sitting barefoot in front of brother Lee. He would just say, "Oh, you call it hippie hair, I call it happy hair." In one meeting in which I was ushering there was a brother in the front row who was high on something. We had to take care of him, to usher him out of the meeting, but in love. We are not in a dream church. The Lord is working out the building up of the church with actual, practical people like us who are capable of anything and everything. So when Paul addressed his epistle "to the church of God which is in Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2a), we are not shocked. The gates of Hades is against us. It is going to try to mess things up. The enemy will try to bring chaos of different kinds into the church. But instead of wringing our hands and praying effeminate prayers of desperation,

we experience the overcoming life and conquer the chaos. Right in the midst of it, we reign in life over it. We can learn to do this.

God's Dispensing Putting our Being in Order

B. God is the divine economy, and He has come into us as an administration, arrangement, and plan to put everything in order.

The God who wants to dispense Himself into us, He Himself is the economy. He came into us in Christ as an administration. I realize singing hymn 981 was not easy, but if you have time, just read through it prayerfully. This shows the conquest of the chaos – no more darkness and corruption, no more vanity. This is how the Lord deals with the chaos: He comes into us as an administration, with a plan and arrangement, to put everything in our being in order through the divine dispensing. Eventually all of our inward parts will be in organic order. Our mind will be clear, sober, and bright. Our emotion will be balanced – we will be truly very emotional, we can weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, bear one another's sufferings. Our will will be pliable, flexible toward the Lord, but strong toward the enemy. The Lord by His dispensing is going to normalize our entire inner being. Not long ago, in a question and response session, I received a question concerning those that had psychological problems. I'm not excluding medical care and professional counseling, there is a place for that. But God's way is to heal us gradually by dispensing Himself into every part of our being. Then

you sense such peace and harmony within yourself. We all know what it's like for the chaos to be going on right inside of us, swirling in us. But we just come to the Lord, He dispenses Himself into us and there is order.

<< Week 2 – Day 5 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Proverbs 18:21: Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat it's fruit.

Rev. 14:4c-5: These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish.

Rev. 12:11: And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

Today's Reading

Looking Away Unto Jesus

C. In the Bible and in our experience, the satanic chaos always goes along with the divine economy.

Knowing all this, we are not shocked. But neither are we paranoid. I'm not looking over my shoulder wondering, "When is the next wave of chaos coming?" No, we are not living in fear of that. I like to follow the word in Hebrews 12: "look away unto Jesus" (v. 2). When the Lord was walking on the sea, and Peter and the other apostles were in the boat, Peter said a good thing, he said, "Lord, speak the word, and I'll come to You." So the Lord said, "Come." Let's give Peter credit – he got out of the boat. I wish we had this on video. They're both standing on the water,

and then Peter begins to look, “Whoa, what am I doing?” Looking at the wind, he sinks. Overcomers learn to look away unto Jesus. I have in my office a Peanuts cartoon. It was not drawn by Charles Schulz, this is long after he passed away – he was a brother, by the way. I had shared in a ministry meeting with the trainees that I could picture a Peanuts cartoon in which one of the characters says, “No problem is so big that it can’t be looked away from.” Then some artistic trainee drew a cartoon of Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy is always holding the football. She says to Charlie, “I’m holding it, you will kick it,” and every time, she pulls it out and he lands on his back. So the trainee drew a picture of Lucy and Charlie and the football, and added the caption “No problem is so big that it can’t be looked away from.” That’s the key. Look away unto Jesus. The enemy’s strategy is to get you to look at yourself, to look at your failures, to look at your weaknesses, to look at the besetting sin, whatever it is. Then he may cause you to look at others, or at the shortcomings in the church, or in that person. The more you do that, the more you sink. Just like Peter, you sink. And I don’t think he just went down to his ankles, I think he got down pretty low that he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

I know this sounds so simple. This is how you conquer. I’m surrounded by all these things, they are in the physical realm, in the psychological realm, they are bothering me, to say the least. But there’s another reality. The Son of Man is on the throne! The glorified Jesus is on the throne! That verb “look away” is a strong verb – it means to turn away from every distracting thing

just to look at Him. “Look away! O look away! Look to Jesus now today! Hallelujah! Look away from everything unto Jesus, look away from everything to Him!” So don’t be disappointed. Please receive mercy to not have an issue with God because the chaos doesn’t stop, can’t stop, yet. The promise is *in all these things*. It’s not in some of the things, not in most of the things, in *all* these things we more than conquer.

Conquering by the Dispensing and by His Grace

D. The overcomers are not delivered out of the satanic chaos; instead, they conquer the destructive satanic chaos and triumph in the constructive divine economy.

That means we triumph by receiving dispensing. It’s so simple to start a new day realizing you are a vessel, to come to the Lord as an open vessel, and to pray simply – maybe while you’re in the shower, even when you’re shaving – “Lord, I open myself to You. Dispense Yourself into me all day today.” Then that divine dispensing brings the divine order, brings the throne into your being, and that is how you conquer the chaos in your environment. Sometimes it appears the chaos is winning, because certain losses in human life are heartbreaking, they’re tragic. We’re human. How can our soul not have an overwhelming reaction? It’s hard to even know we have a spirit. But those who really know how to comfort us don’t try to say things, they just minister life, suffer with us, and eventually in the midst of it, something emerges and conquers the death that’s going on. I testify of this. Song of Songs 8:6-7 says, “Love is as strong as

death.... Many waters cannot quench love, nor do floods drown it.”

1. The overcomers suffer the chaos, but instead of being disappointed or discouraged, they are strengthened and enabled to stand for and live out the divine economy.

2. The overcomers conquer the chaos by the processed and consummated Triune God as the all-sufficient grace.

I appreciate that Paul was not a hero. He had this piercing thorn, and it was exceedingly painful. But he wasn't a hero. He did not say to the enemy, "Is that all you've got? Come on. Give me a bigger one. I'm a tough guy." Instead, he asked the Lord to take it away. Some of us are too spiritual for that. We just want to be tough. Tough guys are not overcomers. Paul said: "Lord, take it away." No answer. Prayer number 2: "Lord, I'm really asking you to take this painful thorn away." No answer. The third time: "Lord, please, remove the thorn." "My grace is sufficient for you." Notice that the Lord did not say, "My grace is sufficient." That would be a doctrine. Now you have a doctrine of the sufficiency of grace, and you can pass on the doctrine to someone else who is suffering: "Grace is sufficient." Just words. But the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient *for you*." For you. "Paul, I'm not taking the thorn away, but I'm not leaving you without a supply. My grace is sufficient *for you*." By this, Paul could eventually say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Vain Talk Spreading Death

II. The overcomers are victorious over the attack of death.

A. Matthew 16:18 shows us from what source the attack upon the church will come—"the gates of Hades," that is, of death.

There is a proverb in the book of Proverbs that is applicable here, and it is exceedingly practical. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (18:21a). Someone very dear to me – very dear – he bears the responsibility for the decisions he made. But he suffered very much and was stumbled very much by death that was spread by talk. Death. By the time it reached him, he was gone, turned away. Death is in the power of our tongue. How much death is spread by cowards on the Internet doing things in secret, anonymously? How much talk? This is just one form. The overcomers will be trained. I observed this in Brother Lee week after week after week. In all my time with him – I did not have a special relationship with him, I was one of the coworkers – he never wasted a word. No vain talk. But, he could communicate in a normal way. I'm not cynical, but the gossip will not stop. Only among the victors will it stop. That's one sign. In the life-study of Genesis, Brother Lee points out how the change in Jacob's speaking points to the transformation and maturity in his being. The way he spoke to Laban was one way, but at the end, when he prophesied with blessing, his speaking indicated his maturity in life. But it won't help to make up our mind – "From now on, I'm going to control myself." That will not last because we're so quick. But we can learn.

1. Satan's special object today is to spread death within the church.

That's what he wants to do. I never go online out of curiosity to find out what slanderous things are being spoken. I don't do that. But this is my standing: All the things you say, they're really good for me, because they help me experience Christ as the burnt offering. But they're not good for you – every word is recorded, and every word will be judged. You read Matthew 12. By contrast, in Revelation 14, you have the overcomers. Revelation 14:5 says, "In their mouth no lie was found." No lie, no guile, no politics, no diplomacy, no deception, no half-truths. Everything is genuine, sincere, real, pure, life-giving. Christ is the only person who lives this way. If the Lord inwardly was ruling over our talk, there would be no gossip. The level of death in the local churches would diminish very much and the level of life would rise very much. I was in a situation where someone dear to me was with me. And a sister was there – a dear sister – asking all kinds of questions. I checked with this other person, "Do you have the same sense that she just wants information?" When you have the information you'll talk about it. That's gossip.

<< Week 2 – Day 6 >>

Verses to Enjoy

John 11:25: Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live.

Rev. 1:17d-18: I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Phil. 3:10-11: To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.

Today's Reading

The Resurrection Life Overcoming Death

2. Satan's greatest fear with regard to the church is her resistance to his power of death.

That's his ultimate weapon. Now here we are being built up in resurrection life, and we resist his power, and we reign over it. That's his greatest fear.

B. The church is an entity absolutely in resurrection.

This is the element of the church, the Body of Christ.

1. The church is a new creation created in Christ's resurrection and by the resurrected Christ; therefore, the church is "resurrectionally."

Brother Lee coined that word “resurrectionly.” The church in Wickliffe, Ohio is resurrectionly! The church in Chicago, the church in Madison, the church in Cleveland, the church in Columbus are resurrectionly! Soon there will be a church in South Bend, Indiana. Resurrection life is going to South Bend! Not for the fighting Irish, but for the fighting overcomers.

2. "God sees the church as a being that can endure death" (Watchman Nee).

Many of the older and more experienced brothers and sisters can testify to you from their experience: the church is a being that endures death, sometimes even as an entire church. Several years ago, the church in San Francisco – the whole church – walked through the valley of the shadow of death. Two of the elders went to be with the Lord within a short period of time, and there were other kinds of sufferings. But the church in San Francisco is now resurrectionly.

C. If we would overcome the attack of death, we need to know Christ in a particular way:

1. We need to know Christ as the First and the Last—the ever-existing, unchanging One—Rev. 2:8.

2. We need to know Christ as the One who became dead and lived again—as the One who is resurrection.

John in his gospel recorded the Lord’s word, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25). But John got another

view of Christ in Revelation 1 – when he saw the Son of Man in glory, he fell at His feet as dead. The Lord put His hand on his arm and said, “Do not fear. I am the first and the last. I became dead and I am living forevermore. I have the keys of death and of Hades.” This I know. This I can testify to you. On the cross the Lord destroyed the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil. In resurrection he conquered death itself, and when He walked out of Hades, He took with Him the keys, the authority over death and Hades. This is my personal practice – you don’t have to follow it – I’m not so comfortable with saying, “The Lord took him.” I’d rather say, “The Lord received him.” He allowed death to take him or her now. But He had control over that. Why a dear sister in her 40’s, a mother of three sons, went to be with the Lord, I don’t know. But we know she more than conquered in that chaos and the resurrection life is operating.

D. The overcomers are faithful unto death and will not be hurt by the second death.

How does the Lord comfort the suffering church? He did not say, “Don’t worry, everything will turn out fine. I’m going to protect you. No pain, no owies, no tears.” He said, “The devil will cast some of you into prison for ten days (indicating a limitation).” This was now the requirement of the overcomers: “Be faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10). That was not for all believers. That was not the general case. It was the overcomers who were in that kind of situation. The resurrected Christ imparts His resurrection life to them in such a way that they are not

afraid of death, they do not love their soul-lives unto death, and they are faithful. We do not know what lies ahead of us. One brother in the Lord – not among us but a real brother – helped me when I read this in his book: “We do not know what is coming, but we know Who is coming.” So don’t live in fear of what is coming, live in hope of Who is coming. We need to know Christ in this way. Brothers, let’s learn from the sisters, because the sisters are not afraid to tell the Lord, “I don’t think I know You in this way very much, so I ask You to give me the experiences I need in order to know You as the One who is resurrection.” The reason I mention this is because the brothers, being more objective, may think, “I understand the concept.” Now we have a concept that Christ is resurrection, but concepts don’t conquer chaos, concepts don’t comfort suffering, heartbroken believers. Only the resurrected Christ does that.

The Crown of Life and the Out-Resurrection as the Reward

E. To those who overcome the attack of death Christ will give the crown of life.

That’s the reward in the kingdom. The overcomers are reigning in life according to Romans 5:17 right now. They are experiencing the reigning life. When they appear before the Lord, He will say, “I crown you with life. You were an overcomer because you experienced My death-conquering life. You were a living testimony of this.”

1. The crown of life denotes the overcoming strength that is the power of the resurrection life.

2. The crown of life signifies that those who overcome the attack of death have attained to the out-resurrection from the dead.

One characteristic of the overcomers is they learn to conquer the satanic chaos by living in the divine economy with the divine dispensing. In all these things they more than conquer. But regarding the attack of death, the overcomers do not only know that Christ is the One who died and who rose again, and is resurrection, but a longing is put in them regarding this. Paul illustrated this, exemplified this, in Philippians. He said, “To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (3:10). Then in verse 11 he gave the goal: “That I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.” What is that? He coined another word – using a preposition with the noun resurrection. He wanted to attain to that. All the believers who have died will be resurrected. The first fourteen verses of Matthew 25 show this. Not all will be resurrected and be in the same condition. Some will be the prudent virgins, whose vessels – their souls – are filled with the oil, that is, the Spirit. Others will be resurrected believers that only have a little bit of oil – the Spirit in their spirit – but they did not get saturated in their soul with the Spirit, so they cannot be in the wedding feast. Belatedly they have to pay the price to buy the oil. The overcomers who are now with the Lord will have a resurrection like graduating with honors. I’m using schools identifying students who graduate summa cum laude, magna cum laude, and with honors as an illustration. The out-resurrection is the resurrection of

the overcomers into the kingdom. That's the objective side.

On the experiential side, Paul wanted his entire being, little by little, to experience resurrection. I have no doubt he was a genius in his intellect and very well-educated. That level of intelligence is God's creation, but in the Body there is nothing natural. The Spirit does not honor anything of our natural ability or natural life. Therefore, the goal of the Christian life is to experience the resurrection life in such a way, that little by little every aspect of our inner being is brought into resurrection. You are very good at management but you don't bring your MBA into the church life. You learn to be a leading one by resurrection life. You are very musical, but we are not going to have you sing a solo on the platform to entertain us. The Lord will have a way to resurrect the ability He created. We do not hold it against you that you are so smart and you are going through Ohio State with a 4.0 GPA right now. That is the way God created you. I tell the trainees who come to the full-time training as college-educated, "most of you are really, really smart. You did so well on your SATs. You got high grade-point averages from Stanford and Yale. Let me tell you, I'm not the least bit impressed. It's all natural. We've been there. Now you're entering the process of resurrection little by little."

The overcomers are getting to know Christ as resurrection, and they are experiencing Him as the resurrection life gradually spreading in their being. Eventually they will reach the point that the only part

left is their physical body. That is where the seeker is in Song of Songs chapter 8. She is ready to be raptured, and Song of Songs ends in the way it begins: with a kiss. In chapter 1 she says, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth” (v. 2a). Then in chapter 8 she says, “If I see you outside the flesh in resurrection and transfiguration, I’m going to kiss You.” Here we end with love once again, my brothers and sisters. The Lord is praying for us. The Lord is ministering to us. The Lord is for us. He wants us to experience Romans 8:37 – “In all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.” Let Him love you. Let this love empower you with resurrection life. Let this love open you to the divine dispensing. We believe the Lord will hear your prayer: “Lord, make me an overcomer for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose.” Amen.

Message Three Outline

Living in the Divine Romance to Become Terrible as an Army with Banners

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:2-4, 12-14; 2:14-15;
4:7-8, 12-15; 6:4, 10, 13

- I. The Bible is a romance, in the most pure and the most holy sense, of a universal couple—God in Christ as the Bridegroom and God’s redeemed people as the bride—John 3:29; Matt. 25:6; Rev. 19:7; 21:2; 22:17:
 - A. The Bible is the entire revelation of this divine romance, and Song of Songs is an abridged form of this romance.
 - B. The subject of Song of Songs is the history of love in an excellent marriage, revealing the progressive experience of an individual believer’s loving fellowship with Christ—S. S. 1:2.
- II. The Lord needs the overcomers to carry out the economy of God to have the Body, which consummates the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1:22-23; Rev. 2:7b; 3:12, 21; 21:2.
- III. In Song of Songs the lover of Christ overcomes in stages:
 - A. In the first stage of this book (1:2—2:7), she overcomes the attraction of the world by being captivated by Christ—1:2-4a.
 - B. In the second stage (2:8—3:5) the lover

of Christ overcomes the self, which secluded her from the presence of Christ, by becoming one with the cross of Christ.

C. In the third stage (3:6—5:1) the lover of Christ overcomes the old creation (the physical things) by living in the ascension of Christ in resurrection after her self has been dealt with by the cross.

D. In the fourth stage (5:2—6:13) the lover of Christ overcomes the flesh, the natural man, the old man, by living within the veil; this requires a deeper experience of the cross.

IV. In the eyes of God the overcoming lover of Christ is as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem; however, to the enemy she is as terrible as an army with banners—S. S. 6:4, 10:

A. The lover of Christ is beautiful and comely before the Lord, as solid as the heavenly city and as serene as the sanctuary; at the same time, she displays the glory of her victory before the enemy and the world—v. 4:

1. Weapons are the most important thing to an army in battle, but unfurled banners, signifying the glory of victory, are the most important thing in victory—Exo. 17:15.

2. Banners indicate a readiness to fight and are also a sign that the victory has been won—Isa. 59:19.
- B. A life within the veil is not only a life before the Lord but also a life before the enemy—S. S. 6:4; Heb. 10:19; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 6:10-12:
1. God has no intention that the lovers of Christ possess the heavenly beauty without possessing a warring nature—2 Cor. 11:2; 10:4-6.
 2. The overcoming lover of Christ not only has a future that is full of hope and a life that is absolutely heavenly, but she is also a victor who constantly triumphs in her victory—S. S. 3:7-8.
- C. A terrible army signifies that the Lord's overcomers terrify God's enemy, Satan—S. S. 6:4, 10:
1. Satan is afraid of only one kind of people—those who do not love their soul- life—Rev. 12:11.
 2. The enemy is terrified of Bethel, the house of God—Gen. 35:1-5.
 3. The enemy is frightened by the church which is built up as the city of God—Neh. 6:15-16; Psa. 102:12-16.
 4. The demons and the evil angels are terrified of the one new man created

by Christ on the cross—Eph. 2:15-16;
Col. 2:14-15.

5. Satan is not afraid of individualistic Christians, even if they number in the thousands, but is terrified of the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate warrior fighting against him and his kingdom—Eph. 6:10-20.

Message Three

Living in the Divine Romance to Become Terrible as an Army with Banners

Hymn: #1226, #437

<< **Week 3 – Day 1** >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rom. 8:37: But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.

Phil. 3:10-11: To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.

Today's Reading

We are living in the age of grace, which is the age of the church, and also the age of mystery, because what the Lord is doing intrinsically cannot be seen by the human eye. This age of grace, of church, and of mystery, has been going on for almost two thousand years. Surely, we're nearing the end. We won't presume to speculate when it will be, but we're nearing the end. The approaching end is a critical time, because both the work of the Triune God and the work of the enemy are intensified. The Triune God is intensifying His ministry, mainly to prepare the

bride by building up the organic Body of Christ and to bring forth the new man. The enemy will do everything to resist this. We like to remind him of the tenses used by John in writing the book of Revelation. We tell the devil, "In the sight of God, you are already in the lake of fire. We are not afraid of you. You should be afraid of us."

At the end of any given age, especially this age, the Lord needs a group of believers to be the instrument through which He will work to turn the age and to bring in another age. The transition period at the end of this age will be called the great tribulation, and the whole earth will be in travail, like a woman in birth. It'll be a time of travail to give birth to the age of the kingdom. Those believers at the end of this age are not a special class, and they're not superior; they simply have received mercy to give themselves to the Lord, to open to Him, to be one with Him, to be gained by Him, and to be trained by Him. They are the instrument through which the Lord can turn this age. They will be recognized at the judgment seat as the true and faithful ones, as the overcoming ones.

Two Characteristics of an Overcomer

No one can know for sure that we are an overcomer. An overcomer is someone who finishes the course, his part in the race. You can't shout "Hallelujah!" until you break the tape, until you finish. Then, when you finish, you say, "I finished the course." This was Paul as a pattern. But we can be praying these simple prayers that activate the Lord: "Lord, I choose to be made an overcomer by You.

Make me a victorious believer as part of Your instrument to turn this age.” We are considering characteristics of these overcomers which are the victors and the conquerors. The first characteristic is that no believer can make himself an overcomer. There’s just too much in our fallen being that would interfere with this. But the Lord, who is the Overcomer, in His ministry in the stage of intensification is actively working to produce overcomers, which are really the reproduction of Himself.

Christ as the seed has been sown into us. As this seed develops under the operation of the law of life, we know according to Romans 8:29 that we will all be conformed to the image of His Son. We know from 2 Corinthians 3:18 that as we behold the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. We’re in the process, the Lord is for us, we should be encouraged, and we should be joyful. On our part we say, “Lord, today grow in me. Lord, today dispense Yourself into me. Today make Your home in my heart. Lord, for the sake of the Body, the bride, and the kingdom, make me an overcomer.”

Another characteristic of the overcomers is that they long, truly, for this age to end, for the Lord to return, and to establish His kingdom on the earth. This longing is produced in us by the Lord Himself. It is the longing and the love in the Lord’s heart that gives Him the desire to want to unite, mingle, and incorporate Himself with us. We love, because He first loved us. Therefore, increasingly, little by little, we long to be one with Him,

to be mingled with Him, and to be incorporated with Him, that is, to abide in Him. The same is true of the Lord's desire to come back for the bride.

Before He comes back as the King, as the righteous Judge, that will be in His open appearing, He will come secretly as the Bridegroom for His bride, who will be composed of the overcomers. He will rapture her, the wedding feast will begin in the heavens, and the tribulation will begin on the earth. At the end of those three and one-half years, the Lord as the commander in chief with His bridal army will descend at Armageddon, deal with the enemy and his armies, abolish human government, and establish His kingdom over the whole earth. This is what the Bible reveals, this is what we believe, this is what we teach, and it is on this that my entire life and service are based. This is what we live for.

More Than Conquer Through Him Who Loved Us

We have a fresh appreciation of a verse in Romans 8. Isn't that a wonderful verse, 8:37? "But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us." There is a wonderful connection between God's loving us and our being the super-overcomers. We more than conquer, hypernikao, super-victors, through Him who loved us. It's through a Person, and it's through a Person who loves us, and that love motivates and energizes and uplifts and enables us in such a way that no situation we are in, no matter how difficult—and we know from experience what difficult situations are—in them we conquer, more than conquer, not just barely make it, but more than overcome

that situation.

Resurrection Life of Christ in Us

Because the ultimate weapon of the enemy to frustrate the building up of the church for the Lord is death, the church is built with the resurrection life of Christ. The overcomers who pass away and finish their course before the Lord comes will be resurrected as all the believers will be, but they will be resurrected with honor, because their resurrection will be the resurrection of the victors. They will enter into the kingdom as co-kings and join the living overcomers that have been raptured. We saw from Paul's pattern in Philippians 3 that he wanted to know the power of Christ's resurrection that enabled him to know the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death. He aspired to attain to the out-resurrection. In experience, little by little, which is the Lord's way of working in life, He wants to resurrect our being. He began with regeneration. Our spirit was deadened. I wouldn't say dead, but deadened, and the divine life came in and resurrection started when we were regenerated.

The Lord wants to expand this resurrection life into our soul with all of its God-created capacities, so that more and more we become persons in resurrection. We know from Romans 5:17 and 21 that grace reigns unto eternal life, and that those who receive of the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life. We also know from Romans 16:20 that soon the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet. We are in a process of the Lord spreading His resurrection life from within our

regenerated spirit to every part of our soul, touching the natural life and touching our natural ability.

We try to help the trainees understand to the degree that they're prepared for this, that you were created in a certain way, you've had a very good education, you're prepared to be in the training, and before long the process of death and resurrection will take place in you, because the Body of Christ is an organism absolutely in the resurrection life of Christ. Even when we sing the third stanza of Hymn 1226, we admit this: "Nothing natural does the Body life allow." The Body has an immune system. Whenever we do something that's in our natural life, the Body rejects it. Don't take it personally. Everything natural is rejected by the Body. More and more, the overcomers will be the reproduction of Christ. They will long for this age to change and for the Lord to come back. They realize it is the love of God for them that motivates them, and they will aspire to advance in resurrection. Death cannot hold the resurrection life.

<< Week 3 – Day 2 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Song of Songs 1:4a: Draw me; we will run after You.

Eph. 5:26: That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

Song of Songs 4:7: You are altogether beautiful, my love, and there is no blemish in you.

Today's Reading

Now we come to tonight's message, altogether in Song of Songs: Living in the Divine Romance to Become Terrible as an Army with Banners. This is a most delightful theme or subject. The overcomers, this terrifying army, are the result of a romance. It's the Lord Himself who knows where He's bringing this seeker, this one who loves Him. She doesn't know in the beginning, and that is altogether OK. She just knows she wants to be kissed, and she asks for it: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth! Your love is better than wine. Your name is like ointment poured forth. Draw me." That's all she knows. Then the Lord takes her step by step, and at certain junctures or turning points, He indicates her progress to her to encourage her. His first word is, "Oh, my love, you are an Egyptian horse, so strong, so much energy." I don't know how much you've experienced this in your church life, but when someone truly and purely

loves you as a brother or sister in the Lord, you can receive anything they tell you, because you know it's full of life, light, and love. No matter what it is, we can receive it. But you know how we are. We might openly admit that I'm this and I'm that. Yet if someone else tells us, you're this and you're that, we're ready to respond rather vigorously.

So here, we're in the divine romance. I still remember December 1974 when Brother Lee opened the first life-study training. In those days the trainings were 10 days long, 30 messages. Our brother was 69 when he started the life-study. When he finished the life-study in 1995, he had already gone on to the crystallization study. It was the life-study of Romans. He began with these memorable words: "The Bible is a romance in the most pure and most holy sense of a universal couple." This sets the tone of the entire ministry of this age – living in the divine romance.

Progress in the Divine Romance and Becoming Overcomers

We want to see the connection between our progress in the divine romance and becoming overcomers. If the Lord didn't reveal this to the seeker, the lover of the Lord, she would never have this view. You are beautiful as Tirzah, a city of the kings, as lovely as Jerusalem. Lord, I love You. I really love You. One day He's going to say this to you. I assure you He will say this to you.

Song of Songs is a one-on-one book. It's not about the church and Christ; it's about the believer and Christ. In

chapter 4, verse 7, He says, “You are altogether beautiful, my love, and there is no blemish in you.” He’s going to say that. We don’t base a teaching on one verse, but on corresponding verses. Right now, in His heavenly ministry, according to Ephesians 5, He’s washing and sanctifying the church, washing her with the water in the Word, and she will be without blemish, without defect, without wrinkle, without scar. This is where we’re all headed.

Beautification Process

By the washing of the water in the Word, there are no defects and no signs of aging. There’s no need for spiritual Botox or any kind of face lifts. I’m being washed in the water of the Word. Any blemishes from the old creation will be removed. Any scars from wounds we sustain, just in our human life, things that have happened, will all be metabolically removed. The Lord will have a beautiful, lovely wife. In Song of Songs, we see the progress of this country girl who loves the Lord, and He came to her in such a way that she wouldn’t be overwhelmed. Solomon came to her. He didn’t want to overwhelm her by letting her realize this was a King.

I’m so glad the Lord became a human being the way He did, born in poverty in a despised region, at best an ordinary-looking man, but actually not at all attractive. In other words, He became like us. And when He came, He didn’t make it evident by saying, “I’m God, I’m Jehovah in the flesh, I’m the Lord of glory.” We would be frightened. He came to us where we were and then began

to draw us to Himself. That's why I love Hymn 437 and why it's so good for all of us, but especially for the young people. They enjoy this, they want to do that, they're involved in this, they treasure that. If you just tell them, "Oh, Christians shouldn't do that," that's religious. Pray that they will see the sight of peerless worth. Pray they see the face that Stephen saw. Pray they will look into the eyes that Peter saw. This is how the Lord takes us on, from being dead in trespasses and sins all the way to be His wife.

We pointed this out to some extent in one of the crystallization messages on Leviticus. In John chapter 3, it's clearly revealed that we were serpentine beings. That's why the Lord fulfilled the type of the bronze serpent when He was lifted up on the cross so the serpent would be judged. But what do we have near the end of John 3? We have the bride. What a shock this is going to be to the enemy: when the bride has made herself ready, she has become the overcoming army. I believe something like this might happen. There is spiritual warfare going on.

The Lord very well may summon the enemy and say, "Come here," because He's the Lord and when He exercises His authority, that's it. "Look at this woman. Look at her. Do you see any blemish in her, do you see any defect in her? She is the one whom you made serpentine like you. You injected your nature of sin and death into her and ruined her. That's what you did. But I came in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and I died to fulfill

the type of the sin offering. I redeemed her, and I defeated you. Then as the Spirit I entered into her and I thoroughly saved her in life. I find no defect in her. Do you? You accused her day and night when she was in the process, but I trained her to overcome your accusation by the blood of the Lamb. You must admit, adversary, she's perfect, she's beautiful. You also know I have all authority in heaven and on earth. Now I give this authority to her because this woman is now going to execute my victory and judgment over you." That will be the terrible army. There will be such an army. Somebody must be the soldiers in that army; why not us? It has to happen somewhere; why not here? It has to happen sometime; why not now?

Becoming Shulammite

The Lord will want to cause us to live through Song of Songs. Don't compare where you are to where others are. We're not in a race against each other. We're not competing. If you are in chapter 1, it's good that there are believers a little ahead of you in chapters 2 and 3 so that they can encourage you to go on. For those who are in chapters 2 and 3, it's good that some are in chapters 4 and 5. Eventually we are all going to reach the goal of Song of Songs 6:13, the Shulammite, the feminine form of Solomon, who is a type of Christ in His glory and in His kingdom. We will be the reproduction of our Beloved in every way except for the Godhead and as an object of worship. That is for Him alone. What is really mysterious is that as He is beautifying us, He is telling us, "You're altogether lovely." When a God-man husband has real

affection for his wife, he'll consider her lovely, and he'll call her lovely. The Lord will do this. But while He and she are delighting in this beautification process, the enemy is getting more and more uneasy because he doesn't see anything lovely or beautiful or charming. He sees something frightening and terrifying, a terrible army. The same person is a loving counterpart and a terrible army. Ephesians 5 is followed by Ephesians 6. In chapter 5, you have the counterpart; in chapter 6, you have the warrior, not the worrier, the warrior. It's the same person.

In Revelation 19:7, we say, "Rejoice, the marriage of the Lamb has come. His wife has made herself ready." Look at her wedding garment; it's radiant. But then as you cross the midpoint of that chapter, the Husband is now the warrior in chief on a white horse. These are signs. He has an army. It seems there's some kind of conversation between the Lord and His wife. He's saying, "Dear, we've been enjoying the beginning of the wedding feast. Now we're going on a journey." "Where are we going?" "We're going to Armageddon." Well, this is the question the women always ask: "What do I wear when I go to Armageddon? What are we going to do?" "We're going to fight." "But what do I wear?" And He will say, "Dear, the way I view it is, your wedding garment is your uniform for fighting. You don't have to change. Just follow Me. Echo what I say, because I'm going to overcome the enemy. All those who are with me, who are called, chosen, and faithful, you will overcome."

Body, Bride, Warrior, Corporate Stone and Kingdom

When it comes down to it, I simply believe in God, and I simply believe in the Word of God. I trust the faithful opening of the Word of God by the minister of the age with the ministry of the age. I believe that there will be a time when the overcoming army, the warrior-bride, will descend with her Husband, the Commander in chief to the earth, to deal with the enemy, and then the bride, which has become the warrior, will be the corporate stone to smash the image at the feet, then the stone becomes a great mountain, and that's the kingdom. The sequence, as I'm always burdened to point out, is that when the Body is built up, that means the bride is ready, and the bride will become the warrior for the fight. The warrior will become the corporate stone to remove human government. The corporate stone will become the kingdom filling the whole earth. Everything hinges on the building up of the Body organically, which building is the preparation of the bride. I've had conferences on this before, but we can't review the whole thing. Five kinds of development will be taking place in us. Don't worry about its complexity. It's all in the divine life and the law of life. As members of the Body, we will build up the Body for the Lord's move. Then we will become the bride with the supreme love for the Lord for His satisfaction. So, our love for the Lord will develop to the uttermost. At the same time, the Lord will train us to be a warrior to fight and to frighten the enemy. Because He will need a stone, He will solidify us and make us weighty, living stones.

The mountain is the manifestation of the kingdom. We have received the high peak of the divine revelation. The ministry of Christ is in the three stages: incarnation, inclusion, and intensification. We have received speaking on God's complete organic salvation, reigning in life, and the God-man living. We have also received speaking on the divine and mystical realm, and the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation. The truth was so high, yet it was presented in a way that we can understand. But in the life practices, this remarkably mature God-man was so simple to say, "Lord, I love You, I really love You." Now we are in a love story. We all may be in different chapters, but this is normal in the church because we are all in progress together. We will all arrive at a full-grown man.

<< Week 3 – Day 3 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 19:7: Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready

Rev. 21:2: And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Eph. 1:22-23: And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Today's Reading

I. The Bible is a romance, in the most pure and the most holy sense, of a universal couple—God in Christ as the Bridegroom and God's redeemed people as the bride. John 3:29 says, "He who has the bride is the Bridegroom." We need to know the Lord as the Bridegroom who is certainly a happy, delightful, pleasant Person. The Bridegroom is one happy, joyful person, and He is out to bring His beloved, His counterpart into His joy and delight.

A. The Bible is the entire revelation of this divine romance, and Song of Songs is an abridged form of this romance.

B. The subject of Song of Songs is the history of love in an excellent marriage, revealing the progressive experience of an individual believer's loving fellowship with Christ. I don't have the sense that tonight I'm rapture-ready. We don't have to feel bad that we haven't arrived, but we should have the sense we're progressing. I don't say anything to make people feel good. I'm not a politician, and I'm not a diplomat. I'm not trying to please you, but this last year has made a difference in the saints and in the churches in this part of the country. There's more Christ in you tonight than there was one year ago. That is without question. As I'm praying with the brothers, what is flowing out in their prayers is a very reliable indicator of what has been taking place in all of us. We may not be in Song of Songs chapter 8. We're in chapter 1, or we're anywhere between chapters 1 and 7. But we're in the process. We have time for the process to be completed.

II. The Lord needs the overcomers to carry out the economy of God to have the Body, which consummates the New Jerusalem. Some theologians, in their partial understanding, are like a half-baked cake, burnt on one side, and raw on the other. They say, "How can you say God has a need? God is omnipotent." Oh, the theology. If God doesn't have a need, then why does He want you to pray? He made it very clear: God has imposed on Himself a principle that He moves as His people cooperate, so He needs them to cooperate. The Lord needs the overcomers. When we pray a simple prayer, "Lord, make me an overcomer," sometimes we have the leading to enlarge the

prayer a little. We say, “Lord, as the sevenfold intensified Spirit, make me an overcomer to overcome all the degradation and to build up the Body of Christ and to consummate the New Jerusalem.” The Lord needs this; He needs this kind of cooperation. He needs the overcomers to carry out the economy of God to have the Body which consummates the New Jerusalem.

Now we come to the stages of overcoming in Song of Songs.

III. In Song of Songs the lover of Christ overcomes in stages. The love in the first stage enables her to overcome a certain thing. As the love develops, she can overcome something deeper. As the love matures, she can overcome something more extensive. Then when she’s really mature, but there’s still the need to overcome in a particular way.

Overcoming by Being Captivated by Christ

A. In the first stage of this book (1:2—2:7), she overcomes the attraction of the world by being captivated by Christ. This is where many newer believers, ones newer in the church life, or just the younger saints are; it’s not just the world they are overcoming, it’s the attraction. The enemy is not omnipresent, he is not a god, he’s not omniscient, he doesn’t know everything, but he knows quite a bit about our soul and our person, and he knows what attracts us, what part of the world attracts us. It’s this attraction that really has to be overcome. That’s not easy: to overcome the thing, that’s one thing, but the attraction becomes a distraction. So how does she, the lover,

overcome the attraction? It's by being captivated by Christ.

The Lord doesn't come in a religious way and say, "Look, don't you realize that's vain, that is a waste, that is damaging to you?" If you gave an honest answer, you would say, "No, I don't see that. I enjoy that, I like that, I want that, I want to wear that, I want to play that, I want to do that, I want to see that, I want to listen to that." But His way is just so delightful. He just unveils Himself a little to captivate you. He will just come to you. How did God begin to carry out His decision to have a special people, the Hebrews, to carry out His economy? He went to Ur of the Chaldees. No one believed in the true God, no one, including Abram. But the God of glory appeared to him, that's it. Then He appeared again. This is His way. This is also the way we want our young people to be attracted. They can only go so far on a borrowed or a second-hand revelation. We need to pray for them that they will be captivated by the Lord's beauty. "Lord, this one is doing this and that. Appear to her, appear to him. Make Yourself known to them." The Lord knows how to do it, when to do it, and how much to do, so that eventually, He is the most captivating Person.

If I remember correctly in Brother Lee's note on looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith, He is called an immense magnet. He is just drawing us. He is not forcing us, not belittling us; He is captivating us. I'm so thankful for Hymn 437, "Captivated by His beauty. Not the crushing of the idols." One might think, "You're

in the church. You can't have that, you can't do that. Smash that, throw that away, don't listen to that kind of music...." That's religion. That isn't the Lord's way. The Lord's way is to captivate, to unveil Himself. Maybe not much will happen the first time, then He comes again. Abraham goes halfway, then the Lord appears again, and Abraham goes further. This is His way. So, we overcome the attraction of the world.

<< Week 3 – Day 4 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Song of Songs 2:14: My dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the covert of the precipice, Let me see your countenance, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your countenance is lovely.

Rev. 12:11: And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

Today's Reading

In the second stage (2:8—3:5) the lover of Christ overcomes the self, which secluded her from the presence of Christ, by becoming one with the cross of Christ. She got into a certain stage where she's so content to lie here in this lovely place enjoying the Lord, and He's not around. Then He appears in a way she never saw Him before, like a hind, a deer, leaping, skipping, full of energy, bounding here and there.

He says, "Come, My beloved. Come away. Come. Winter is over. The rain has stopped. The birds are singing. The flowers are in bloom." But she is deeply in herself, contemplating herself, introspecting, gazing inward. We all pass through this kind of stage. If you're there now, don't be shocked. You're not weird, you're not strange; you're just in the second stage where everybody has to be.

Maybe you don't budge for a while, because the self is like a black hole, sucking everything into it. Introspectively, we look at ourselves, and because self-love hasn't been touched, we go deeper and deeper into an abyss. Then the Lord is not here as He was before, and He comes in another form. We're not about to move. He knows we're immobile. So, He energizes us with His resurrection life, and we overcome this self. You will. Even if that's where you are right now, the next time I see you, you're going to be in the cleft of the rock, at least. You're not going to be here. This is a stage you are going to pass through.

Because the self secluded her, the Lord wants to bring her to the clefts of the rock. By the power of His resurrection, He is bringing her to the subjective experience of the cross. That's the cleft of the rock. For the Lord, He first was crucified, and then was resurrected. In our experience it's the opposite. First, we touch resurrection life and power, then that resurrection life and power makes us willing and able to experience the cross. Now she is in the cleft of the rock, and she is one with the Lord in His death. He doesn't call her a lily anymore, and He doesn't just say, "You have dove's eyes." He says, "My dove, your countenance is lovely, your voice is pleasant." The countenance is the expression of your inner being through your face, and that's something we can't fake. Someone told me once that one way to tell whether a smile is genuine or fake is by looking into the eyes. If the eyes are smiling, then the smile on the lips is genuine. Before too long, the Lord is going to indicate to you, "your countenance is lovely. And when you pray and

when you talk to Me, your voice is like sweet music to Me.” So here you are, overcoming the self. This is the second stage.

Overcoming by Living in the Ascension of Christ

In the third stage (3:6—5:1) the lover of Christ overcomes the old creation (the physical things) — the entire old creation, the physical realm and all that’s in it—by living in the ascension of Christ in resurrection after her self has been dealt with by the cross. Brother Lee pointed out many times that when Watchman Nee was ministering, they knew that he was in severe pain physically while he was speaking, but because he had passed through this third stage, even though he was suffering in the physical realm, he overcame it. I know a dear brother. When I’m sitting next to him in a ministry meeting, I know what’s going on in him just before he stands up and ascends the platform. I know the struggle to overcome the long-lasting physical limitation and suffering in his body. But message after message he does it. You probably have no awareness that it’s happening.

We do not become angels, but we overcome the limitations of the old creation. Brother Nee has a message on resurrection, the Spirit, and the church, and he points out that resurrection breaks through all limitations of space and time. When the Lord was in incarnation, He could be in Galilee, but He couldn’t be in Jerusalem. But now in resurrection, He is omnipresent; He’s here. And so, we break through the physical things by living in the ascension of Christ. This is normal. From the perspective

of ascension, you look down into the air. There you can see the enemy's activity and you know how to deal with him. You can see the lions' dens and the shepherds' mountains. Because you are living in ascension and from the position of ascension, you pray the prayers of warfare and the prayers of authority. Living in the ascension of Christ in resurrection comes after the self has been dealt with by the cross. In the next conference, we will come to living in ascension with the transcendent Christ to carry out God's economy. This may sound way beyond. It's OK. You're in the let-Him-kiss-me stage, or you're in the spikenard stage, or you're in the looking-at-yourself stage. Sooner or later, you're going to get to the clefts of the rock. Resurrection life will operate in you, and then you'll be experientially one with Christ in His ascension. The Lord will remind you to keep looking down. You're above the enemy. So this is where the warfare takes place; this is after the self has been dealt with by the cross.

Overcoming by Living within the Veil

Now we come to the fourth stage in Song of Songs (5:2 6:13). In this stage, she has become the sanctuary, the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle. She learns to live in the Holy of Holies, but the veil still remains. When Brother Lee touched on this, I just couldn't get it. He said that this is a deeper dealing with the flesh. Here you are, you're the same as God in life and nature. He's dwelling in you, you're dwelling in Him, you're His dwelling place, but still the veil of the flesh is with you. And the flesh never changes, it never improves. There needs to be a

deeper dealing with the flesh. The Lord leaves it here to drive us to Himself to perfect us. So when I first heard this, I was temporarily held back by my partial knowing. I was thinking, “Brother Lee, dealing with the flesh is in the third stage.” I’m glad he didn’t hear me say that because he might have said, “Brother Ron, I was in the third stage before you were born. I know what’s in the third stage. But I’m in the fourth stage now, and my dear brother, you are not yet here.”

Eventually I realized, He is where I am not. But He is for our being where He is. And He is providing the way for us to get there. After some years went by with some more experience, I can now say, “Brother Lee, even in this advanced stage of overcoming and maturing in the divine life, we still have the flesh.” I can tell you, even as an older man, and a brother with some measure of growth, the Lord is leading me now to have a much more thorough dealing with the flesh than when I was back in the third stage. I’m so thankful that Brother Lee opened this way, otherwise I wouldn’t know what to do. I wouldn’t have understood. I would have said, “What is going on? Why am I being bothered by this? I thought this was over.” Well, obviously it’s not over. Your body is not transfigured. The flesh hasn’t improved. You just have less energy. But you are still capable of doing anything, right? Don’t have any trust in yourself. It’s the soul that’s transformed, not the flesh.

In the fourth stage (5:2—6:13) the lover of Christ overcomes the flesh, the natural man, the old man, by

living within the veil; this requires a deeper experience of the cross. When the Lord was crucified, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, signifying that the way into God has been opened through the redemptive death of Christ. We know from Hebrews that the veil typifies the flesh. So the Lord dealt with the veil by breaking it, by tearing it. The Lord deals with the flesh by the cross in the same way. Here's what happens. The flesh stays here. On the one hand, the Lord has dealt with it; on the other hand, it's still with us. Every day, and again and again throughout the day, I have to exercise the spirit, to apply the cross, to go through that veil and enter into the Holy of Holies. The Lord in His wisdom uses even that flesh as a motivating factor: "Don't stay there. You stay there for a while, you know what happens." Then you apply the cross and we go on.

<< Week 3 – Day 5 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Song of Songs 6:10: Who is this woman who looks forth like the dawn, As beautiful as the moon, As clear as the sun, As terrible as an army with banners?

Eph. 6:10-11: Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil.

Today's Reading

IV. In the eyes of God the overcoming lover of Christ is as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem; however, to the enemy she is as terrible as an army with banners. Babylon is lovely to the enemy, but abhorrent to God. The bride is beautiful to the Lord, but the same person is terrible as an army with banners to the enemy.

A. The lover of Christ is beautiful and comely before the Lord, as solid as the heavenly city and as serene as the sanctuary. Your life is going to become more and more calm, tranquil, and serene inwardly. Oh, it's so pleasant! At the same time, she displays the glory of her victory before the enemy and the world. Her neck in symbolism is the storeroom of the weapons. The neck signifies her will, which is now submissive and flexible to the Lord, but strong to resist the enemy. The weapons of the warfare

are wielded by her will.

Unfurled Banners – the Glory of Christ’s Victory

1. Weapons are the most important thing to an army in battle, but unfurled banners, signifying the glory of victory, are the most important thing in victory. We have weapons and we have banners. We should unfurl a banner, spiritually speaking. We proclaim to the universe and we proclaim to the kingdom of Satan, the victory of Christ on the cross in His resurrection and ascension. We are the army of the victorious Christ. We don’t fight for victory. He did that. We fight from victory. We fight in victory.

2. Banners indicate a readiness to fight and are also a sign that the victory has been won. We need to see this. We are not capable of destroying the devil on the cross. Our Lord did that. Now we participate in His victory.

B. A life within the veil is not only a life before the Lord but also a life before the enemy. That may sound strange. You are living before the Lord, but now you are ready to participate in spiritual warfare. If you look at Ephesians, that is wrestling. You don’t wrestle someone from 30 yards away. This is close contact. One morning in 1997, Brother Lee called a number of us to be with him. We went, and he said, “During the night I was fighting with the enemy nose to nose.” Then he said, “You need to learn how to fight like this.” Then he gave us real-life training and coaching right there. We are not walking around enemy-conscious, but because we are living before the

Lord and loving Him, we are now ready to participate in His warfare with the enemy.

A Warring Nature

1. God has no intention that the lovers of Christ possess the heavenly beauty without possessing a warring nature. Sometimes, women don't understand the male makeup, why we like tough things, physical activity, daring things, and even contact sports. We admit we're fallen, but it's in our nature to fight. We were made to fight down the enemy, and the bride is going to have a warring nature because she has this dual function of being the lovely bride and being a frightening army. It doesn't matter what your temperament is, if you were a wimp, if you were a coward, or if you are afraid of any kind of direct confrontation. It doesn't matter. The Lord is going to transform us so that toward the enemy we all have a warring nature.

I was in my office one morning when one sister representing a group of older, faithful, experienced serving sisters stopped by with a question. She said, "We're concerned about a younger sister, and her situation is literally one of life and death." She asked, "Can we pray the prayers of warfare?" I said, "Yes, you can. This is not just a brother thing. You are members of the Body. You can, only you need to be covered. But you go and pray, and we will cover you." They prayed fearsome prayers, and they saved the life of that sister. She's going on to this day, years later, because they learned how to exercise their warring nature in the

prayers of warfare, to rebuke the enemy and tell him, “Hands off our sister.” This will eventually be the portion of all of us.

2. The overcoming lover of Christ not only has a future that is full of hope and a life that is absolutely heavenly, but she is also a victor who constantly triumphs in her victory.

<< Week 3 – Day 6 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 12:11: And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

Song of Songs 6:4: You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.

Today's Reading

C. A terrible army signifies that the Lord's overcomers terrify God's enemy, Satan. The enemy is afraid of the church that can withstand death. Now he's afraid of a corporate female warrior that can overcome him directly.

Love Not Our Soul Life Even unto Death

1. Satan is afraid of only one kind of people—those who do not love their soul-life. Remember what Satan said to God concerning Job when God had limited Satan's activity. Satan wanted to do more, and God allowed him within measure. The enemy says, "Everything that a person has, he will give for his life." This is the nature of our soul-life. We'll do anything to save it. Anything. And as long as that exists, the enemy has a way to defeat us. We only go so far, and we realize that sometimes we won't even present ourselves in a perfecting situation or

open up for fellowship because we're saving our soul-life. But, as the love for the Lord increases in us, and as we learn to see what the self is and what the soul-life is, spontaneously we won't love it. We will love the Lord more than life itself. It'll just happen. This is not for superheroes, and not you. No. I'm no superhero, for sure, but I can testify, this is happening.

Brother Nee points out about the overcomers in Revelation 12:11, they overcome the accusations by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, that is, to speak to the enemy concerning the victory of Christ, then their attitude is that they do not love their soul-life. Now, sisters, please receive mercy and grace. We all love our soul-life, but your need for security just in your humanity is much deeper than a male needs, and anything that threatens your soul-life is really the most frightening thing of all. But when the Lord gains sisters, as well as brothers, who do not love their soul-life, He has the warrior. The enemy knows he can't touch her. She doesn't fear anything. She's not holding anything back from the One she loves. She's not preserving any part of herself for herself. She's not doing that to try to make a sacrifice out of some kind of fanatical motive. It's purely out of love. The Lord's word, "Be faithful unto death", rings in her; that word supplies her. So the enemy is afraid of those who do not love their soul-life. The Lord intends to make you an overcoming believer who loves Him more than you love your soul-life. If you're not there tonight, don't lose sleep over it. The Lord knows when you're ready to touch certain things. When you're ready,

it will happen. And the thing you were so afraid of, you'll say, "Was that it?" Yes, that's it. The Lord did it. You're in another realm.

Terrify the Enemy

2. The enemy is terrified of Bethel, the house of God.
3. The enemy is frightened by the church which is built up as the city of God. That's why in Nehemiah there was such a fight over the building of the wall, much more opposition than in Ezra, over the building of the house. But the Lord had the right person, the properly aggressive person, Nehemiah. He told them, "Will such a man as I flee? Do you think I'm going to flee? You're going to frighten me? I'm not going to stop." Then he equipped everyone, building tool in one hand, weapon in the other. We're all spread out on the wall. If the enemy attacks where you are, sound the trumpet. We'll all gather to where you are, and we'll fight him down. We need this kind of proper aggressiveness in our church life, in the gospel preaching, and in our prayers.

4. The demons and the evil angels are terrified of the one new man created by Christ on the cross. They are afraid of this corporate man, because here comes the fulfillment of Genesis 1:26. By the new man's image and dominion, the demons and evil angels are finished. This corporate new man has the authority to drive them from the earth. That's why we have the ground to pray for the enemy to lose ground in this part of the country. Cleveland is the Lord's. Ohio is the Lord's. All the Great Lakes area is the Lord's. We are here to evict the enemy. We cry out to the

Lord, and the Lord may say, “You do it.” Like Moses, the people are crying out to him at the Red Sea in a hopeless case. Moses cries out to God, and God says, “Why are you calling out to me? I raised you up for this. You’ve got the rod in your hand. Just stretch it out and I’ll open the sea. You’ll get through and I’ll drown Pharaoh’s army.” This is going to happen, little by little. But if we’re together again in the future, let’s say a year from now if that’s the Lord’s arrangement through the brothers and the Lord’s leading, we’ll come together, and we’ll be more beautiful and more terrifying than we are tonight. Because we’re going to spend every day of the next year getting beautified and becoming more frightening to the enemy.

5. Satan is not afraid of individualistic Christians, even if they number in the thousands, but is terrified of the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate warrior fighting against him and his kingdom. We all begin as His energetic horse, full of natural energy motivating our love. The Lord knows; He’s not bothered. He takes us step by step until we become as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem, as terrible as an army with banners. You were created for this. You were chosen for this. You were redeemed for this. You were regenerated for this. You’re in the church life for this, so let’s simply ask the Lord to carry all of this out as we are enjoying a sweet, divine romance.

Message Four Outline

Fighting the Good Fight, Finishing the Course, and Keeping the Faith to Receive the Reward of the Heavenly Kingdom

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, 18

- I. “I have fought the good fight”—2 Tim. 4:7a:
 - A. A proper Christian life involves fighting the good fight against Satan and his kingdom of darkness and for the interests of God’s kingdom—Eph. 6:10-19.
 - B. Whenever we minister Christ to others, we find ourselves in a battle; hence, we should be soldiers fighting for God’s interests—2 Tim. 2:3-4.
 - C. To fight the good fight of the faith means to fight for God’s New Testament economy; in particular, it is to fight for Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 6:12; 1:4; Col. 2:9, 19.
 - D. The Lord’s ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war; to war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God’s economy according to the apostles’ ministry— 1 Cor. 14:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18.
- II. “I have finished the course”—2 Tim. 4:7b:

- A. A proper Christian life involves running the course for the carrying out of God's economy according to His eternal purpose—1 Cor. 9:24.
 - B. In order to run the race, we need to put away every encumbrance, every unnecessary burden or impediment—Heb. 12:1.
 - C. We run the race by looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith—v. 2.
 - D. We need to run the race with endurance, suffering the opposition with endurance and never growing weary or fainting in our souls—vv. 1, 3.
- III. "I have kept the faith"—2 Tim. 4:7c:
- A. A proper Christian life involves keeping the faith for participation in the divine riches in God's economy—1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:12; Titus 1:4; Jude 3.
 - B. To keep the faith is to keep the entire New Testament economy of God—the faith concerning Christ as the embodiment of God and the mystery of God and the church as the Body of Christ and the mystery of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4.
- IV. Those who fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith will receive the crown of righteousness and will be saved into the heavenly kingdom"—2 Tim. 4:8, 18:
- A. The crown of righteousness is a reward that

will be given to all who love the Lord's appearing—v. 8:

1. The Lord's appearing, His coming back, is a warning, an encouragement, and an incentive to us—Matt. 24:42.
 2. We should love the Lord's appearing and look forward to it with earnest expectation and joy—Titus 2:13.
 3. Loving the Lord's appearing is in contrast to loving the present age, the world now before us—2 Tim. 4:10.
 4. If we love the Lord's appearing, we will take sides with Him, not with the world, and we will fight for His interests—Matt. 6:9-10; James 4:4.
- B. The overcoming believers will participate in the heavenly kingdom, the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens—2 Tim. 4:18; Matt. 7:21:
1. The overcomers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father—13:43.
 2. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will drink the cup of the new covenant anew with their Lord—26:29.
 3. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will enter into the Lord's joy and thus gain their soul, save their soul, and enjoy the salvation of their soul — Matt. 10:39; 16:25-26; 25:21, 23; Luke 9:24; Heb. 10:39; 1 Pet. 1:5.

4. In the heavenly kingdom the overcoming believers will reign with Christ and rule over the nations—Rev. 20:4; 2:26-27.
- C. To receive the reward of the heavenly kingdom is to have the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in a particular way; this special portion will be the prize to His faithful followers—Matt. 25:21, 23; Phil. 3:14; Rev. 17:14.

<< Week 4 – Day 1 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 2:7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 3:12: He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Today's Reading

Overcomers within the Church

In Revelation Chapter 1, Jesus the Son of Man manifested Himself to the apostle John in an amazing way. Then He spoke to John to write down what he saw and heard in a scroll and send it to the seven churches. Then the Lord named the seven cities in which those churches were located. In Chapters 2 and 3, Jesus Himself spoke specifically and exactly to the messenger in each local church, and, at the end of His speaking, there were two kinds of utterances. One is the repetition of the words, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” But the most particular utterance was a call for an overcomer in that situation

and the promise of a specific reward in the coming kingdom for that overcoming believer.

The seven churches from Ephesus all the way to Laodicea were actually seven local churches at that time, but in the book of Revelation, they have a prophetic significance in that each church refers to an aspect of the historical development of the Church until the end of this age. Ephesus is the church right after the time of the apostles. Smyrna signifies the church suffering persecution for two or more centuries. Pergamos signifies the church in union with the world. Thyatira signifies the Roman Catholic Church fully established by the sixth century and existing till the end of the age. Sardis signifies the churches that came out of the reformation that will also exist to the end of the age. Philadelphia signifies the recovered church that fulfills God's purpose and Laodicea signifies the degraded recovered church.

In each situation, the Lord spoke about overcomers as someone who would be victorious and conquer any kind of negative situation that was hindering God from carrying out His purpose. But I want to emphasize here that the overcomers have a positive function. They fulfill God's purpose as it is being worked out in the situation where they are. Even in the churches – genuine churches – a significant number of saints over time develop certain practices or concepts that are contrary to God's economy. For instance, the union with the world, or the bringing in of pagan things and mixing them up with the divine things, or being lukewarm, or having a name that you're

living but actually being spiritually dead. The overcomers in that particular situation conquer the negative element, but they *also* are involved with carrying out God's purpose as it is being unfolded in space and time.

Experiencing in the Present the Reward for the Future

The promise to the overcomers in each case – for instance in Ephesus, he who overcomes will eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God, or to the overcomer in Smyrna, if you are faithful unto death, you will have the crown of life – on the one hand, is in the future. All those promises refer to a reward in the kingdom age. Yet the principle governing these words to the overcomer is that what they will experience and enjoy in the coming age, they are already experiencing and enjoying *now*. So with the overcomers in Ephesus, it is not as if none of them are eating of the tree of life, and they then overcome the loss of the first love and the first works, and then in the kingdom only will they partake of the tree of life. No! Rather, because they are overcoming, they are participating in this tree of life *now*. It is because they are in the reality of this *now*, when the Lord comes and establishes the kingdom, that reality will be openly manifested.

Our view of what an overcomer does and who an overcomer is needs to be complete and balanced. On the one hand, the overcomers, the victors, are conquering any negative element. On the other hand, they are actively carrying out God's economy. This is one reason why even

in the recovered church, Philadelphia, the church concerning which the Lord finds no fault, He still makes a call for overcomers. In Philadelphia, He has nothing to correct. In all the other churches, He found shortcomings, failures, which He identified. (Of course, with Smyrna, there was nothing critical because they were paying the price with their lives to be faithful. Though they had some shortages, the Lord let them go because of their faithfulness unto death.)

God's Purpose being Fulfilled by the Overcomers in the Recovered Church

But with a recovered church like Philadelphia, a church that does not deny the Lord's name and keeps His word and already has the crown, why does the Lord call for overcomers? Suppose an athlete is preparing for a certain event and is conditioning himself to be in the best state to run a marathon. To arrive at such a condition is quite an exercise, but it's an even greater exercise to maintain that state your whole life, maintaining your health and your vigor. The Lord said that the overcomers in Philadelphia keep His word and honor His name, but then He says something truly amazing. In Revelation 3:12 the Lord mentions the New Jerusalem, because what God has had in His heart from eternity past will be fulfilled by the overcomers in the recovered church.

In principle the churches in the Lord's recovery are instances of the recovered church. The Brethren were the recovered church two hundred years ago, but they degraded to Laodicea. We may be the recovered church

today, but we should not be self-confident. We need to humble ourselves; we could repeat that history. So as we are being exercised to hold fast what we have that no one would take our crown, as we exercise to never denominate ourselves by taking the name of any person or thing, and as we hold to the pure Word of God, we're *maintaining* what has been recovered. But the overcomers do something else. When I began to realize this, it gave me a fresh view of what God wants to accomplish in the church life today. It's not only that we come out of division, meet on the ground of the oneness of the Body, practice one church in one city, do away with the clergy-laity system, honor the pure Word of God above any traditional teaching, call on the Lord's name, and live in the reality of the kingdom. A local church is not the goal. The local churches are the procedure through which God attains His goal. The goal is the reality of the Body of Christ which ushers in the bride of Christ and consummates in the New Jerusalem.

<< Week 4 – Day 2 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Rev. 3:12: He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Heb. 12:28: Therefore, receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with piety and fear.

Today's Reading

The Overcomers are Built into God

So in verse 12 we see the reward to the overcomers in the church in Philadelphia. Please remember that the reward in the future describes something that is happening in the present. We must have the reality of the kingdom if we are to be rewarded with the manifestation of the kingdom. So the Lord says, “He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes out of heaven from My God, and My new name.” So, first the overcomer becomes a “pillar in the temple of My God.” But in the New Jerusalem *there is no temple*, “For the Lord God the

Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Therefore to be made a pillar in the temple of God is to be built into God!

The Bible is an amazing book. So in Chapter 21 *there is no temple*. In some kind of physical way, the Triune God *is* the temple, and now saints in the church in Philadelphia are being “pillarized” – being made pillars in the temple of God. They are now unshakeable. They are bearing the weight of the Lord’s testimony from here to the end of the age. They are built into God! So when the New Jerusalem descends, it’s not a material city, and it’s not a gigantic space station orbiting earth. The New Jerusalem is a woman, the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and the overcomers are part of that.

The Overcomers are the New Jerusalem

Then the Lord goes on “I will write upon him the name of my God.” He’s not simply writing with a pen “you belong to God.” Writing upon him means he is becoming God in life and nature. Christ is constituting us to be the same as God in life and nature, but of course not in the Godhead and not as an object of worship. So the name of God is put upon the overcomer not only to indicate he belongs to God, but to indicate he *is* God. That’s what it is – an identification. Then He says, “I will write upon him the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem.” Through the overcomers, we establish this connection between the church in Philadelphia and the ultimate consummation of God’s economy, the New Jerusalem. To write the name New Jerusalem, city of My God, on you is not simply to say you belong. It’s to say *you are*.

The New Jerusalem, not a material city but a corporate person, will be manifested in two stages: the first stage in time, the second stage in eternity. The age of the kingdom will also be the age of the initial manifestation of the New Jerusalem. At the end of the kingdom age, when every negative thing is dealt with at the great white throne, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We must wait to see whether there is a time element or not; at that point we're in eternity. Then, there is the New Jerusalem constituted of all the believers.

But during the age of the kingdom, the New Jerusalem is constituted *solely* of the overcomers. And the overcomers who will constitute the New Jerusalem are being produced in the recovered church, Philadelphia, the local churches. The words "I will write upon Him my new name," are the same principle. My emphasis is that in the church life in the Lord's Recovery, we're just not treading water. We're not here trying to keep our head above the water until the Lord comes back, just holding on to everything and not degrading in any way. That is merely the negative aspect of overcoming: nothing impure comes in, the clergy-laity system doesn't creep back in, we're not lukewarm, we love the Lord, we love His word, we have the crown. In contrast, the word to the overcomer indicates something very positive needs to be taking place in the lives of the saints.

The Need for Unshakable Pillars in the Recovered Church

It is amazing that Brother Lee in the last three years of

his ministry, reaching what I felt was a peak of maturity unmatched since the time of the apostles, released the high peak of the divine revelation – God became man to make man God in life, nature, and expression, but not in the Godhead. Then he spoke about the application of the interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the seeking believers. Then he ministered to us on organic salvation, being saved in life, and reigning in life. His very last ministry in the Chinese Speaking Conference, winter of 1997, was on being saved in Christ's life equaling reigning in life, where he ministered to us about the God-man living. All of these lines of ministry carry out Revelation 3:12, where the overcomers in this particular situation in the recovered church, have a positive function. They're not just in the church life, maintaining what they have received. Rather, they are becoming divinely human, becoming God in life and nature through the divine dispensing, organic salvation, reigning in life, and the growth in life. They are becoming pillars, unshakeable believers. In Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2, she declares to the Lord, the pillars of the earth – referring to God's victorious people – they belong to the Lord, He set the earth upon them. They bear the weight, they bear the testimony unshaken to the end. Overcomers are unshakeable! They are constituted with the unshakeable God.

It is significant that Hebrews 12 says we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Right now, not everyone in the church life has been constituted to the point that they are fully divinely human, but we should be in this process. It

should be part of our being and part of our seeking. We are being built into God Himself to become as unshakeable as the kingdom of God is, and in all the local churches there needs to be such pillars. These pillars will not have a label, this could be any believer, but they are the stability of that church no matter what happens and no matter what the enemy does. Some of the younger ones may be shaken temporarily, but they will realize, "I am in the most secure place on the earth. The pillars are here supporting God's building, and their presence inspires me. I want to follow in their steps. I want to be built into God. I want to be a pillar in resurrection."

<< Week 4 – Day 3 >>

Verses to Enjoy

2 Tim. 4:7: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

2 Cor. 10:4: For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds.

Today's Reading

The Need for Unshakable Pillars in the Recovered Church (contd.)

We are becoming the New Jerusalem. In one of his last speakings on Lord's Day morning in Anaheim, Brother Lee gave a further word on the Crystallization Study of the Gospel of John. He said we do not *enter* the New Jerusalem, we *become* the New Jerusalem. Our becoming is our entering. Consider, we became adults, we entered into adulthood. That doesn't mean we went on a journey and we arrived at a place called adulthood. Rather, we grew into it. There should be a growing taking place and we should be seeking that. We should be motivated to pursue that. "I write upon him My new name," means that we are becoming God. With the overcomers there is the negative side in the sense that there are problems that need to be solved, situations that need to be conquered, and the enemy's strategy that has to be defeated. But that's not all. They are actively one with

the Lord, carrying out what He wants to accomplish now.

In 1994, Brother Lee gave a conference on the practical points concerning blending. It was deeply touching when he said the local churches are the procedure. The goal is the reality of the Body of Christ. Yet almost 24 years ago, he said he did not see the reality of the Body of Christ anywhere on earth at that time. This was his burden. Once it entered into me, it's been an ongoing burden in me day and night. The reality of the Body of Christ is the corporate living of the God-men who live a life of being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of resurrection, expressing the divine attributes in their human virtues. The local churches, your local church, is a procedure for this. This will arouse in us not a desperation but a continual seeking, hungering, and thirsting after the Lord. So I've come to pray prayers like this: "Lord, Christify me. Sonize me. Lord, make my heart a duplication of your heart in every positive way. Lord, train me to be a God-man, to pray the prayers of a God-man." This is going on mainly inwardly while we are living the church life. I wish our brother were here and I could ask him, "Brother Lee, what is your discernment now concerning the reality of the Body of Christ in the Lord's recovery?" I have no idea. My perception doesn't anywhere match his, but I believe we have made progress. Yet we need to go on much further, because the Lord having the reality of the Body of Christ in the churches equals the readiness of the bride. That means He is able to come back.

In outline 4, we are considering Paul's final testimony concerning the overcoming life. We know from Paul's word in 1 Timothy 1:16 that he, the great sinner, received mercy from the Lord to be a pattern to all those who would believe. The Lord Jesus is the prototype of the God-man, the Overcomer. Paul is the pattern of a sinner who becomes a reproduction of Christ. God chose a very great sinner, one who tried to destroy the church for which Christ died, one who was breathing out murder against us all. Yet the Lord chose to have mercy on such a sinner, choosing to display in the life and experience of this person how we can end our life victoriously as overcomers. There are three aspects mentioned in the title, and then the reward of the heavenly kingdom.

Fighting the Good Fight

I. I have fought the good fight.

Paul used the terminology of warfare and combat a number of times. When instructing his spiritual child Timothy in his first letter in 1:18, he said, "You need to war the good warfare." Here, warfare is to stand against any dissenting, divisive teaching contrary to God's economy, and to carry out God's economy. As Paul was finishing his course, he knew that he'd fought the good fight, and Timothy, a younger soldier, was remaining. So Paul, as a pattern, fought a good fight. Even in sports, when there is still some sportsmanship, no matter who wins, both can say it was a good fight. So we are involved in a good fight. You may say, I was raised in a kind of Christian group that was pacifist, I don't want to fight. Well, we don't fight to vindicate ourselves, but certainly

we should fight for God's interest against His enemy.

A. A proper Christian life involves fighting the good fight against Satan and his kingdom of darkness and for the interests of God's kingdom.

This is what Paul did. If you would consult the chapter in *The Experience of Life* on spiritual warfare, admittedly very far advanced in the fourth stage, Brother Lee points out that every aspect of our service is a warfare. If one would have the heart to really serve the young people, one needs to realize there is a war raging concerning the young people. The enemy wants them; the enemy wants to steal, corrupt, and destroy them. It doesn't mean that we come into the young people's meetings and start casting out demons and rebuking the enemy, but we realize there is a fight involved. We're going to fight for our young people. My heart was broken in 1997. I watched the enemy come in and utterly destroy someone very close to me, someone heading full speed with intense concentration to the full time training. Who knows how many this has happened to and yet we sit and we wonder why! We need to be alert. There is a brother, perhaps now in his early sixties, who served with the children. We served together with the sixth grade boys in Anaheim, more than thirty years ago. He still prays for those boys that he served in children's meeting. You have probably never heard of this brother, but he is fighting a good warfare. The prayer meeting is a fight. So we are involved in a good fight against Satan and for God's kingdom.

B. Whenever we minister Christ to others, we find ourselves in a battle; hence, we should be soldiers fighting for God's interests.

Don't try to force this awareness upon yourself. Eventually you will be fighting the battle. Whenever Brother Lee was ministering, he was fighting a battle to release the truth and to impart it to us. In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul was in a similar battle even in relation to the church people. He said the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, as we overthrow every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, to break through the fortress of the mind, so that the truth can reach one's spirit.

<< Week 4 – Day 4 >>

Verses to Enjoy

1 Tim. 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

1 Cor. 14:8: For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

Today's Reading

A Proper Understanding of the New Testament Ministry

C. To fight the good fight of the faith means to fight for God's New Testament economy; in particular, it is to fight for Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ.

Now, I mean no disrespect with regards to what I say. A Christian magazine called *Christianity Today* has been in existence for almost 60 years. Billy Graham was the founder. If you would get an issue from 1960 and compare it to an issue from 2018, you will realize the title of that magazine is exactly right – Christianity Today. This is a picture of the whole complicated mess of organized religion, and there's virtually nothing in any issue of that evangelical magazine that is related to God's New Testament economy. This is why Brother Lee was so

burdened that we have a publication to challenge the theology of Christianity, and this is what we're trying to do little by little in Affirmation and Critique. So we're not just here indifferent that we have God's economy. No, we fight for it! We will not allow anything into the church life that is contrary to this.

We need to understand a distinction. That is, we receive all believers, but we do not receive all ministries. There is one ministry, the new covenant ministry, carried out by many faithful brothers who have their portion. Paul said we have *this ministry*, referring to the corporate ministry. He also told Timothy, "fulfill your ministry." He told Archippus, "fulfill your ministry." And so the blending brothers today, on the one hand, are part of a corporate ministry. On the other hand, each brother has his portion that is precious. So we receive the *ministries* of those who are in *the ministry*, but we do not receive any other ministry into the church. If you want to read and pursue other things, there is no control, but as far as what is presented in the church life, it has to be the pure Word of God concerning the economy of God.

D. The Lord's ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war;

In the coming Memorial Day conference in Kansas City there will be the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war. We will summon the army all over the earth. It's time to go to war in this particular way. Let's learn to fight the good fight.

D. to war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God's economy according to the apostles' ministry.

Finishing the Course

Then Paul says, "*I have finished the course.*" This doesn't mean he's taking an online course at a university. The course is his part of the race, and this meant a lot to him. When he was talking to the elders in the church in Ephesus, he told them, "I know trials and hardships, bonds, await me. I know, but I'm not afraid. I do not count my life as precious to itself, that I might finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord." In Hebrews 12, again we have the matter of running the race set before us. God has allotted or planned for every believer a course and a journey. An overcomer is a believer who finishes it. The vast majority of believers never even consider there's a course to run. They never received the proper teaching, never saw a proper pattern, and sadly many didn't finish, so they didn't overcome.

Brother Nee has a message which I find very comforting in my personal situation. The message is on the last stage of the journey, and the text is from the portion in Mark where the Lord told the disciples to go into a boat to the other side. The disciples get in the boat and there's such strong resistance from the wind and the waves. But then the Lord appears to them, gets into the boat, and they make it. What's encouraging is, according to Brother Nee, the last part of the journey is the hardest part. I thought, this makes sense, and it doesn't instill fear, it imparts

faith. Now we're reaching the hardest part of the journey. This means we're approaching the end, we're approaching victory.

Each one of us has a journey, a course to run, and from time to time spontaneously, I just encourage the brothers to finish the course. Whatever happens, finish the course. If you get knocked down, get up and start running again. I love a verse in Micah; the prophet says, "Do not boast against me O my enemy, for when I fall I shall rise again." I've had my share of knockdowns, of being there, wondering if I'll ever get up again, but through the ministry of the Lord, the prayers of the saints, the supply of the Body, you get up, dust yourself off, and keep on running.

Paul knew he was an overcomer at the moment he said, "I have finished my course." While you're still running you cannot say, "I have finished." A documentary on the iron man triathlon in Hawaii showed that the athletes first swim for maybe three or four miles. Then they bicycle about 112 miles, after which they run a marathon. The athlete is considered having finished the course if he reaches the deadline by sunset. In the documentary, one woman was shown to be exhausted 100 yards from the finish line, and she didn't finish. Young people that are sports minded don't do your high-stepping until you end at the end zone. You may slip and fall and land you know where! We are just running. So no one who is sober in thinking would say, "I'm an overcomer." I have received emails from people boasting that they are overcomers. I

fear for them. We just keep running, and when we are at the end, we'll know we are at the end. Then we'll say, "I finished."

<< Week 4 – Day 5 >>

Verses to Enjoy

Heb. 12:1: Therefore, let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles *us* and run with endurance the race which is set before us.

1 Tim. 1:4: Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Today's Reading

Not How We Begin but How We End

A. A proper Christian life involves running the course for the carrying out of God's economy according to His eternal purpose.

We are all members of the Body. We are carrying out God's purpose corporately, but we need something to motivate us personally and that is our course. When a co-worker or any saint goes to be with the Lord and we are left with the sense, "He finished his course," it is a great comfort and it continues to be a great comfort. I am not usurping the Son of Man's responsibility to judge us all, but when I heard of how brother Terry Scanlon was with the Lord in the very last stage of his life, and how his son said, "My dad is a pattern to me," it gave me

the impression that Terry had finished the course.

Let's use a football comparison. We should see it's not about who's leading at half-time. I want to explain what I call "the parable of the two-minute drill." In professional football there is a two-minute warning at the end of the first half and at the end of the fourth quarter. The team Denver Broncos led by the player John Elway was 12 points behind at the two-minute warning. It's a home game, and Denver had the ball. Even loyal Bronco's fans were leaving the stadium, but they forgot John Elway is an expert at the two-minute drill. He knew how to score quickly, in a short time. So he comes on and sends out the receivers, not for a really long bomb but maybe 20-30 yards. They catch the ball right by the sideline, step out, stop the clock, move the yardline up, and repeat the same thing again. In 40 seconds they score a touchdown through the conversion, only 5 points behind, and a field goal won't work. They have to kick, but there's such a thing as an onside kick where under certain conditions the ball goes a certain distance. Both teams, being aware, put out the hands players (those who've got a good grip). If this doesn't work Denver loses the game and the other team will just wear the clock out. But Denver pulled off the onside kick and gets the possession of the ball! Then Elway goes at it again and, with just a few seconds left, scores the other touchdown. They win! The point is, don't be disheartened if you're way behind at halftime, or if in the third quarter you haven't gained much. We have got the best Quarterback in the universe! I tell you - it's how

we end! It's how we finish! It's *that* we finish!

Running the Race

B. In order to run the race, we need to put away every encumbrance, every unnecessary burden or impediment.

We are advised in Hebrews 12:1 to “put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us,” and the Lord will enlighten us regarding what’s hindering us. Just be simple. You have what you need to live a normal human life, isn’t that enough? Just be simple.

C. We run the race by looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith.

It takes faith to run the race. He’s the Author so He started it. Now we are in situations, we’ve been running for a long time and we get weary; we have falls, and a lot goes on. However, when you look away into His glorious face, He infuses more faith. He perfects your faith to develop your faith, and you find yourself mysteriously getting up and moving again, and the enemy loses another round. The enemy says, “You’re finished. Why don’t you just settle for the New Jerusalem in eternity? You are never going to make it.” That kind of thinking comes from the enemy. The Lord will counteract that. We can say, “Enemy, shut up. I’m not asking you, I’m commanding you. Shut your lying mouth.” We are rising up again, and we are going to continue running until we finish the course.

D. We need to run the race with endurance suffering the opposition with endurance and never growing weary or fainting in our souls.

We need to run the race with endurance, and this is not exactly a characteristic of the national character of the United States. We are not a crockpot culture, we are a microwave culture. It has to be quick, it has to be now, and I can't wait. Now, now, now! That's when you fall into the temptation of loving the now-age. What we need is endurance. We have to recognize that we may not have it, but Christ is our endurance, suffering the opposition with endurance and never growing weary or fainting in our souls. I may be wrong but methinks at least one person came to this conference fainting in their soul. I believe we are all going to leave here encouraged, supplied, and happy in Jesus because it's believers like us that the Lord has to work with to make overcomers. So why not us? Why not here? Why not now?

Keeping the Faith

III. "I have kept the faith".

This is not the believing act, it's what we believe.

A. A proper Christian life involves keeping the faith for participation in the divine riches in God's economy.

The bride will undergo a particular development as she is maturing, signified by the breastplate. That is, faith and love will develop in us until perfection with balance. You should look forward to this. The Lord will develop your love for Him, your love for the brothers and sisters, and your love for human beings. You will even love the

enemies and those who oppose you. This will happen, and along with it, the Lord will perfect our believing ability. But here we keep the faith – the content of what we believe.

B. To keep the faith is to keep the entire New Testament economy of God—the faith concerning Christ as the embodiment of God and the mystery of God and the church as the Body of Christ and the mystery of Christ.

In other words we keep Christ and the church, the great mystery.

The Reward

IV. Those who fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith will receive the crown of righteousness and will be saved into the heavenly kingdom.

2 Tim 4:18 reads, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me into His heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” This is a good verse to pray-read. I believe the Lord will save me from every evil work, and will save me *into* His heavenly kingdom. Can you say Amen to that? So it is good to pray, “Lord, save me from every evil work. Save the young people from every evil work. Deliver us from every evil work. Save me into His heavenly kingdom.”

<< Week 4 – Day 6 >>

Verses to Enjoy

2 Tim. 4:8: Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

Matt. 25:21: His master said to him, Well *done*, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Today's Reading

Loving the Lord's Appearing

A. The crown of righteousness is a reward that will be given to all who love the Lord's appearing.

We emphasized this Friday night. We need the Lord to work in us a love for His appearing. So if He were to appear right now, we would drop everything and say: "Lord, let's go. I leave everything. I'm not going to go back to my room - oh, this tie that I like, my iPad, my Smartphone..." You *just* love His appearing. Isn't it helpful to see the contrast in the loves present in 2 Timothy 4? This coworker was seemingly such an influential person and carrying out such an important work, but when it came down to it, he loved the present age. Yet at the same time, there are just ordinary saints, living the church life, going through all the things in

human life, and they love the Lord's appearing. They are the overcomers.

1. The Lord's appearing, His coming back, is a warning, an encouragement, and an incentive to us.

2. We should love the Lord's appearing and look forward to it with earnest expectation and joy.

For some reason, more than at any other time in my life, I am longing for the Lord's appearing. "Oh Lord, just come back. Come back as soon as possible. We want to cooperate with You. We love Your appearing."

3. Loving the Lord's appearing is in contrast to loving the present age, the world now before us.

All of us have to see beyond the present moment but especially the young. Moses did this. He was a remarkably capable person instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He probably would have been on the same rank as Pharaoh, but he gave it all up. He left the temporary enjoyment of sin and identified himself with God's suffering people because he considered the reward and saw the one who was invisible. We all need to see this; our young people need to see beyond the present moment. Life is going to fly by, and there will be consequences. And so we need the Lord to deliver us from loving the present age. Some of us need to fight in prayers: "Lord, deliver the young people from loving the present age. Cause them to love Your appearing."

4. If we love the Lord's appearing, we will take sides with Him, not with the world, and we will fight for His

interests.

Through the media, the world is constantly bombarding our mind with so many things. The Supreme Court said that same-sex marriage is a law. Okay, that's the world. I'll never accept that. That is not God's arrangement. I am not going to try to change society. Let the people do what they want, but I am not taking sides with the world at all. This must be absolute in us; a boundary in our being and in our mind. We must say: "I'm not taking in that way of thinking. I'm standing with the Lord and fighting for His interests."

The Heavenly Kingdom

B. The overcoming believers will participate in the heavenly kingdom, the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

1. The overcomers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt 13:43).

In Matthew 17, the Lord said some are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God coming. The Lord took three of the apostles on the mountain, and what did they see? Jesus shining! The kingdom is Jesus shining over you, and those who experience Jesus shining over them will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Isn't that a lovely word? Matthew 13:43 says "shine forth like the sun." We will have to see how we reign. Maybe we will show up in a lawless situation and just shine. And we'll say, "what are you doing? This is not allowed here. You're now in the kingdom of righteousness. This is a blessed time to live.

The Lord has allocated this part of the country to me; you're not going to do that. Any time you do that I'm going to appear, shining on you until you stop. I'm going to shine you into obedience."

2. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will drink the cup of the new covenant anew with their Lord.

When He set up the table, we all drank the cup; He said "I will not drink it until I drink it anew with you in the kingdom." Don't you want to be at the Lord's Table meeting in the kingdom when the Lord Himself shares the cup with us?

3. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will enter into the Lord's joy and thus gain their soul, save their soul, and enjoy the salvation of their soul.

What does it mean to save our soul? To save our soul-life is to not be willing to follow the Lord if it causes us any suffering. To lose our soul-life means because we love Him, we are one with Him, we follow Him even if our soul suffers. We lose the natural enjoyment of the soul-life, but at the same time there's the inner enjoyment of Christ. All human beings, right now, today are looking for whatever will bring delight to their soul. So their ethic is to live a life that has the least suffering and the most enjoyment. But the overcomers are willing to follow the Lord at whatever price. When Brother Nee was in Hong Kong, he asked someone to take him to the train station and went back into the mainland, having some idea what awaited him. Then his soul and his body suffered for 20 years. Yet his last testimony was, "I have kept my joy."

What a pattern this is! So, to gain our soul or to save our soul is, when the Lord comes, our soul is released from all of its suffering and it enters into the marvelous joy of the Lord.

4. In the heavenly kingdom the overcoming believers will reign with Christ and rule over the nations.

I have had a kind of unusual thought for years. I'm not saying this will happen, but I kind of hope for it to happen. During the first half of the twentieth century in China on the campuses there were two forces operating among the students: the communists and the gospel preaching in the Lord's recovery. During that era, it was the age of Mao Tse-Tung and Chou En-lai. Brother Nee was considered an antirevolutionary, put in prison, and died a martyr. Brother Lee until his end was branded by the communist government. Yet how sweet it would be if in the coming age of the kingdom, Brother Nee, who was born in the south gets the southern half of China and Brother Lee, who was born in the north gets the northern half. Then for a thousand years these two brothers reign over China. We'll have to wait and see. I want to be there. I just can't imagine that the Lord is going to measure out Iceland to Brother Lee and Patagonia to Brother Nee. We just want to be there. We leave it to the Lord to allocate our reign.

Now we conclude:

C. To receive the reward of the heavenly kingdom is to have the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in a particular way; this special portion will be the prize to His faithful

followers.

Don't you now believe at least a little bit, even a little tiny seed that the Lord is able to make you an overcomer? Isn't He very good at doing this? Don't you believe He wants to do this? So let's just ask Him and believe that He will answer our prayer. "Lord, for the Body, for the bride, and for the kingdom, make me an overcomer!" Praise the Lord!