

FAITH THAT OVERCOMES

BY PASTOR ERIC A. LAMBERT, JR.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith” (1 John 5:4 KJV)

This is a great message of hope given to the believers of Christ. Since we have been born of the Spirit of God, we are guaranteed to overcome all the devil brings before us. There are many things that come against us as children of the Most High God. We must understand how to defeat the enemy in every situation. I am very concerned that Christians are not operating as overcomers and are allowing the enemy of their soul to rob them of the life that Jesus has for them. When we learn how to overcome the enemy, our life of victory will be joyful and filled with the peace of God.

The Apostle John teaches this great truth in response to a time of decline in the church at Ephesus. Many of the members had succumbed to the hellish doctrine of Gnosticism. The Gnostics taught that nothing good comes from the flesh, so Jesus must have been a false Savior since He came in the flesh. If He came in a flesh and blood body and nothing good can come of the flesh, then the natural conclusion is that Jesus is not God. Many Ephesians became confused and left the church and some sent word to the apostle John to ask for help. John challenged the doctrine of the Gnostics by writing the books of 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, which contained the truth of doctrinal stability.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13 KJV)

He wants to further give them a sense of the true character of God.

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8 KJV)

The apostle John wants to bring the believer into a position of doctrinal stability and tells the Christian that the key to believing is to be an overcomer! Think of it, we are overcomers and the enemy cannot do anything to keep us down. Praise God!

HOW DO WE OVERCOME?

Yet, the question remains: How do we overcome? Are we overcomers because of our church work? Are we overcomers because of our ministries or our church memberships? No, No, NO! John tells us we are overcomers because of our faith.

We overcome simply because of our faith. If we are to be overcomers, we must fully understand

what faith is and how to use it in our daily lives. We need to move beyond the crisis faith we are developing and move into walking by faith. One of the meanings of walking in the New Testament our lifestyle. Wouldn't you like to be on top of situations once in a while instead of reacting? That is what being an overcomer is about. Overcomers walk in victory and they live in a realm of consistency of spirit. They are not easily shaken and they learn to listen to the Lord.

PRESUMPTION VS FAITH

We have the ability to enter into the rest and the peace of God before the situation becomes unbearable. I want to share some facts with you to help you develop true Biblical faith and move beyond the attitude of presumption that is invading the church today. Presumption is when you think the Lord has spoken to you and you discover what you heard cannot be validated by the Word of God. Instead of accepting you missed God, you then try to get God to go along with your belief system. You begin to claim promises that are not yours and take hold of truths that are not given to you for your current season or situation. This is simply an act of arrogance. You can even begin to "demand" that the Lord move, even though He has demonstrated that this clearly is not His will for your life.

LIVING BY FAITH

"Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him:
but the just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:
as it is written, *The just shall live by faith.*" (Romans 1:17)

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for,
The just shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:11)

"*Now the just shall live by faith*: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall
have no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:38)

In each of these verses, the Word declares that the just shall live by faith. The verses do not say that the just shall react by faith but they shall live by faith. Living by faith is more than claiming a few scriptures. It means to walk continuously in the realm of believing and trusting God. Faith properly used will bring us deliverance, healing, and victory.

The Apostle Paul teaches that we must have the shield of faith.

"*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*". (Ephesians 6:16 KJV)

In Paul's day, the Roman soldier used two types of shields. There was the personal battle shield, which was carried for close combat. Then there was the "siege" shield that the soldier stood behind when the enemy would shoot arrows. It is this shield Paul had in mind when he said to take the shield of faith. We stand behind the Word of God when the enemy shoots his darts at us.

Faith is used to defeat the accusations and lies of the devil. Faith will lift you where the Lord wants you to be. It (faith) has always been used as a tool to promote spiritual growth in the things of the Lord and to maintain complete victory in our spiritual lives.

When we walk in faith, we are a threat to the kingdom of darkness. The devil hates it when a child of God recognizes the true purpose of faith and begins to live as the Lord would have them to live. When we learn the proper principles of faith, we will live as overcomers and not victims.

We are able to stand and overcome the devices of the enemy by using our faith. Faith is given to us by the Lord to keep us in a state of constant victory. The doctrine of faith has been so perverted by our fleshly desires that we think true faith is validated by our possessions. How many of you hear these expressions, "I believe God for a new Mercedes, or a new \$500,000.00 house." We constantly hear that the Lord wants us to have more stuff, while many around us go hungry and have no place to live. We are being told that the abundance of materialistic possessions is a true testimony of our faith. I submit to you that if this is the case, the drug dealer is walking by faith with his many fancy and expensive things.

THE STRENGTHENING OF FAITH

Our walk with the Lord is constantly being challenged by the enemy and our minds are forever being challenged by the things of the world. Our adversary will always try to defeat us by challenging our faith. Since we are overcomers by our faith, we need to strengthen our faith. Now I know you are asking this question, "Pastor Lambert, just how do I strengthen my faith?"

We can take the biblical answer and sit under the teaching and preaching of the Word of God until the Word becomes alive in us. We can follow the leading of the Lord and discover what he has designed for us while trusting him in all things. We can be blessed by the faithful, fruitful testimonies of those whom the Lord has brought out of difficult situations. In short, we need to do whatever is necessary to fertilize our dormant faith and make it grow.

We want to examine the Word of God and find out which verses of Scripture will edify us in such a way as to bring growth to our faith. Let us begin with the ever popular, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17 KJV).

When the Apostle Paul teaches us about our faith being exposed to the Word of God and growing, he places the emphasis on the word hearing. The word hearing is *akoe* (ak-o-ay) in the Greek which means *the act, the sense or the thing heard; audience, ear, which you heard*. Paul is literally saying that faith comes by what you have heard. Faith isn't coming while you hear. Belief is coming while you are hearing the Word. Faith comes after hearing, when you have the courage to work with your belief.

This is how presumption develops. When someone tells you to act on what they say right now, they are trusting that you will move by impulse and emotion. They use phrases such as, "move now while the anointing is here to bless you." Now I ask you, will the anointing ever leave? Yet they want you to move and respond without thought or logic. That is not true biblical faith.

True faith comes as a result of what you have heard. When you hear the Word of God preached under God's anointing, you will begin to develop faith. Now I believe that faith is very real.

Faith has a unique ability to bring us to the Lord's desired destination for our lives. Yet, our expression of faith must be tested by the Word of God. Now I know many of you are saying, "Pastor Lambert what about the young man that Paul spoke to when he (Paul) saw the boy had faith to be healed?" Yes, it is true that Paul told the young man to stand upright on his feet when Paul saw there was faith to be healed.

We must ask a logical question: when did the young man hear the word? Was it when the Apostle Paul spoke or could it have been earlier? I believe that faith was generated when he heard the Word of God. The most powerful tool that the Lord has given to the church is His Word. The Word of God tells us that God has given to every man a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). As we hear the Word of God, the initial faith that the Lord has given us will grow. We must understand that the Word of God is designed to reach our spirit and bring us into the "realm of God."

WHAT FAITH IS NOT

In this post-modern world, we must realize that there are many doctrines that are sent by our enemy. When Paul called the elders of Ephesus to Miletus, he wanted to warn them about the possibility of false teachers coming into the church and deceiving the people of God. Believe me, this danger is ever present in the world today.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28-29 KJV).

These false teachers come to deceive and to bring doctrines that are biblically unsound. Unfortunately, the doctrine of faith is one of the casualties of the modern theological world. We are told today that if we "have faith", we can command the Lord to move on our behalf. Now, if you are thinking correctly, then you know that you cannot command the Lord or demand that He does anything. Remember the Scripture that says,

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalms 115:3 KJV).

God cannot be dictated to as that would violate His character. God is God and His will is the final and only authority. Faith is not given to us to force God to change His mind. Faith is not a weapon to beat on the will of God but a tool to comply with His will. When we really understand faith, we will see the blessing in the proper use of this dynamic instrument.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED

We often hear these great words from the book of Hebrews: *faith is the substance of things hoped for*. Key here is the word "substance". Substance in the Greek is the word *hupostasis* (*hoop-os'-tas-is*) which means a *setting under (support), foundation or abstract*

assurance. Faith is therefore the support of assurance literally giving strength to your hope. Faith causes you to stand, until the thing hoped for becomes real. Faith gives assurance that we will have the thing that we ask of the Lord, as long as our desire lines up with His will.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15 KJV).

The key to successfully using this verse lies in the phrase, *“ask according to His will”*. This is the problem with the modern use of faith. We are constantly told that we can shape the will of God through the application of faith.

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10 KJV).

The Apostle Paul, a man of great faith, tells us of an experience that he had with the Lord. He states that he sought the Lord to remove the thorn, which was a messenger from Satan, from him. I am sure that Paul uses faith to get through to the Lord and when the Lord does not give Paul what he desires, Paul does not pout. He simply recognizes the sovereignty of God and works within the confines of the will of God.

You see beloved, real faith sees the will of God and looks for opportunities to work with the Lord. Paul literally says, since the Lord will not move this thorn, then I will glory in the will of God. I will recognize that when I am weak then I am strong. Paul understood that if the Lord says no to the thing he desired, then He must have a better plan for him. Faith is *not used* to change God's mind but to comply with His will.

I can just hear the 21st century believer in prayer: *“Lord, you know that I am serving you with all my heart. Now you have to move in the name of Jesus. Remove this thorn and keep it from me now Lord. I command you to move on my behalf.”* You see how we use faith to try to change God's mind.” A real prayer of faith sounds like this: *“Lord I thank you for hearing my request. You have chosen to give me this thorn to strengthen my faith. I admit that I do not like this situation nor do I feel good about it. However, I am standing on your Word and trusting you at this time. Please teach me the lessons you have planned for me. Amen.”*

My brothers and sisters, we must agree with the Lord at all times and stand on what He says from His word. He never makes mistakes and He always knows what is best for us.

BY FAITH

Remember the opening passage? *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4 KJV)

How do we use faith to overcome the world? Let’s review! Faith is

- The substance of what you hope for.
- The spiritual ability to believe the Words of God.
- A gift from God to enable us to stand in the face of adverse situations.
- The result of hearing “sound” doctrine.
- A tool to comply with the will of God.

When we put all of this together, faith is the supernatural ability to hear the Word of God and stand on what the Word of God says in spite of what you are told by your flesh. That’s the simple truth to embrace. Praise God!

In Hebrews 11, we read of the many great exploits done by servants of God. One of my favorite stories is the story of the parents of Moses. The Word of God says,

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

(Hebrews 11:23 KJV)

Moses’ parents were aware of God’s call on their son. They were so aware of God’s favor on Moses that they were no longer afraid of Pharaoh’s decree to kill all firstborn boys. Can you believe the degree of faith they possessed? They acted in faith simply because they believed God; they believed that God had something greater in store for their son.

In order for faith to be valid, there must be accompanying actions.

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17 KJV)

We must have works to go along with our faith. If we say we have faith, let us have the works to prove our faith. What does it mean to have works with faith?

When we work with our faith, we move toward the promise of God. If we truly believe that the Lord has given us something, we will work towards it. For example, if the Lord tells us He will bless us with a job, then we must make ourselves marketable. That’s right. We must do what we can to enforce the faith that the Lord has in us when He made the promise. I say to you that you should consider increasing your works so that they may line up with the promise. When Moses’ parents believed that their child was special, they simply believed. However, when they hid Moses they demonstrated faith. Hallelujah! It is exciting to see them move beyond belief to faith – *by faith, they hid their child because they believed.*

What are the things you want God to do in your life? How are you moving towards that thing you desire? Remember, it is the will of the Lord to bless you and bring you

into a place of blessing. He desires nothing but the best for us and in fact wants to bring us into a place of fruitfulness. I am simply joyful about the Lord's plans for my life. However, I know that His plans requires my cooperation. When you read the book of Hebrews, you see that each person had to cooperate with the Lord's revealed will. That requirement is ever before us.

STEPS OF FAITH TO OVERCOME THE WORLD

Now that we know that we overcome the world by our faith, we need to examine the steps to take towards a fruitful faith walk.

Step 1 - *We need to know the will of God for our lives. This is a simple step. God wants the best for us. The Word of God abounds in verses that tell us of God's covenant care.*

God desires that we

- Prosper and be in health. (3 John 1:2 KJV)
- Live life to the fullest. (John 10:10 KJV)
- Walk in joy and peace. (Romans 15:13 KJV)
- Live in love. (Eph 5:2 KJV)
- Have all of our needs met by His grace. (Philippians 4:19 KJV)

Now if we truly believe the Word of God, we will work towards the plan that the Lord has for us. That is the true walk of faith. Since we believe the Lord wants the best for us, we work within those guidelines.

Step 2 - *We need to live holy lives. The life of an overcomer is a life of purity. Purity and holiness are not popular subjects in the church today, yet these doctrines are biblically defensible. Our lives of personal holiness will insure our ability to overcome. Let's see the revealed will of God on this subject.*

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:"
(Thessalonians 4:3 KJV)

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (1 Thessalonians 4:7 KJV)

"For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (Leviticus 11:45 KJV)

Personal holiness is essential to the overcomer's life. We need to investigate our lives to determine if there is anything that violates the Word of the Lord. If we discover any uncleanness, we need to clean it up and throw it out!

Step 3 - *We need fellowship! Nothing helps the overcomer to be more victorious than spending time with other overcomers. The Word of God tells us that we need to be faithful in our fellowship.*

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25 KJV)

We are admonished to come together regularly for fellowship that is exhorting and edifying. Overcomers who stay to themselves will eventually become a target for the devil. Satan just loves “Lone Ranger” Christians. When we try to stand alone, we lose sight of the true purpose of the church. The gift of salvation brings us into a family and develops true intimacy with the Lord and our brothers and sisters.

You know our faith grows through the experiences we share with other believers. When you hear someone tell of God’s delivering power it can bring more faith to our heart. It is great to hear someone say, “You know the Lord delivered me from this bad situation or from this sickness.” When we hear those words of victory, it can truly bring us into a place of victorious, powerful living.

BE AN OVERCOMER

Our faith is being tried and tested through many circumstances and trials. We can remain victorious if we stand on the Word of God. Our hope should not be in our preacher, our church, or our denomination. Our faith must be in the Lord Jesus, the anointed one of God. He alone has the power to bring us through all the enemy puts on us. I want you to practice living the victorious life. Change your thinking and your speech. As your mind is renewed by the Word of God, you will find a place of peace and tranquility that the world will not be able to take away. The Apostle Paul tells us that we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2 KJV)

Through the transformation of our minds, we begin to see things through God’s eyes. PRAISE JESUS! Just imagine this: you will be able to see things through the eyes of the Lord. Problems will take on different light as we see things according to God’s will. Just as Joseph finally saw God’s plan for his life, we can boldly claim what the devil means for evil God will use for good! HALLELUJAH!

Overcomers think differently. We think God’s thoughts and we speak God’s words. Victorious speech begins in your mind and travels to your soul and spirit.

My brothers and sisters, we need to live as overcomers and stop allowing the enemy to make us victims. Jesus says we will have what we say; our speech will either bring victory or defeat. We are to study God's words until our life changes for the better. My friends, a change of thought will bring a change in action. That is our goal! We want to cast off the old man and put on the new man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We overcome the world by uniting with Jesus and walking in obedience to him.

Spend time in the Word of God and learn to say what God says and you will live the life of the overcomer. ✨