

Series: Becoming the Church at Philadelphia

Pursuing a Bridal Relationship_2

I. Intro

1. We continue today in the series entitled “Becoming the Church at Philadelphia”.
2. As I have mentioned several times during this series, the church at Philadelphia is a picture of the bride who has made herself ready at the end of the age. Therefore, it becomes the model to church to which believers should aspire to become.
3. Last week I began highlighting 10 life pursuits taken from the study of this church that we would do well to make our life pursuits.
4. Last week, I discussed 4 of them:
 - a. Become a part of the global corporate bridal church.
 - b. Love Christ and one another
 - c. Set apart your life for Christ and His purposes
 - d. Become truly genuine in your walk with Christ
5. In this message, we will continue that discussion as we will discuss 2 more today beginning with a call to overcome.

I. Overcome the world, flesh, and devil.

1. **To be made ready as a bride for Christ, believers must overcome the world, flesh, and devil so as to be an overcomer.**
 - a. Rev 3:12: *'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*
 - b. The call to overcome is one of the predominant themes in the book of Revelation.

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- c. The Greek word translated overcome or overcame is nikaō (nik-ah'-o), which **means to conquer absolutely, to carry off the victory, to subdue, to vanquish, or to come off victorious.**
- d. This definition indicates that there is a struggle with some type of entanglement, sin, or area of compromise one engages in battle and endures through until victory.

Rev 3:11: 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

- e. The church at Philadelphia already possessed the overcomer's crown signaling that they had already overcome all of the rebukes and challenges of the other six churches.
- f. The message to them was to not lose what they had already gained—not to lose their overcomers status.
- g. They had overcome the world, flesh, and the devil. For us, we must do likewise.

2. The call to overcome is a call to obey the word as presented throughout scripture.

- a. Jesus said to Philadelphia:

*Rev. 3:10: Because **you have kept the word of My perseverance**, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

- b. The bride being made ready is called to overcome all of the rebukes to the churches listed in Revelation 2-3:
 - i. First love
 - ii. Lukewarmness
 - iii. Hypocrisy in your relationship with Christ
 - iv. Jezebel, etc.

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- c. But it is more than the challenges of Revelation, the bride is called to become obedient to the commands of the New Testament.
- d. The commands of Jesus in the gospels
 - i. Sermon on the Mount
 - ii. Other teachings throughout the gospels
- e. The teachings of the apostle Paul in his epistles
 - i. The deeds of the flesh
 - ii. Embracing the cross
 - iii. No longer I who live but Christ in me
- f. I know it feels overwhelming

3. The call is not to sinless perfection

- a. Some refer to “sinless perfection” or “entire sanctification” where some believe that a believer can reach a state in this life where they no longer commit sin to be perfect in holiness.
- b. This belief confuses spiritual maturity with moral sinlessness.
- c. This is not what the Bible teaches and in my opinion is impossible to achieve.
- d. Let’s spend a moment delving into Matt. 5:48

Matt 5:48: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- i. The Greek word here is *teleios*: means complete, mature, fully developed, brought to its intended end. (Strong’s G5046); full-grown, mature (Abbot and Smith); properly, brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness; perfect (Thayers).
- ii. Related to telos (G5056), meaning “end, goal, purpose, completion.”

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- iii. So, one of the meanings is “perfect”, but the predominant use is mature.
- iv. Related to believers, the word primarily Indicates wholeness, maturity, or completeness in character, purpose, or love.
- v. Used in James 1:4 (“that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing) with the sense of spiritual maturity.
- e. Let’s look at how the word is used in Matthew 5:48. This verse summarizes the entire Chapter 5 and even all of the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, the call is to:
 - f. It does not mean achieving sinless perfection in this life but rather being complete, mature, and whole in love and righteousness.
 - g. We are speaking about **a lifestyle of progressive sanctification**; that is, closing the gap between imputed righteousness and realized righteousness.
 - h. Many other verses speak of growing toward maturity not being perfect. Some are:
 - i. *1 John 1:8 – “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*
 - ii. *James 3:2 – “For we all stumble in many ways...”*
 - iii. *Philippians 3:12–14 – Paul says, “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on...”*
- i. Let’s look at the call to be blameless
 - i. Ephesians 5:27 and Rev 14:5 speak of the bride being blameless
 - ii. The Greek word means: without blemish, faultless, free from fault
 - iii. Blameless suggests full maturity in Christ characterized by purity, faithfulness, and truthfulness in a corrupt world, set apart uniquely for God.
 - iv. Quotes from theologians

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Andrew Murry: “God does not demand of us a holiness that is not within our reach, but has provided for it in Christ Jesus. The call to be holy and blameless is a call to live out what He has wrought in us and for us.” (Holy in Christ, p. 47)

Robert L. Thomas (Commentary on Revelation) On Revelation 14:5: “Their blamelessness denotes the absence of moral defect, not in the sense of absolute sinlessness in this life, but in the sense that they have remained unstained by the world’s idolatry and immorality, and thus their testimony is unblemished before God and men.” (Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary, p. 205)

John MacArthur: On Ephesians 5:27: “The church will not be sinless in this life, but when presented to Christ, she will be made glorious, without any stain of sin, holy and blameless by His redeeming and sanctifying work.” (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, p. 164)

John MacArthur: On Revelation 14:5: “The 144,000 are blameless in that they are faithful, pure, and undefiled by the corrupt system around them, and their mouths speak only truth, reflecting their pure hearts.” (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 12–22, p. 63)

George Eldon Ladd: On Ephesians 5:27: “The holiness and blamelessness of the Church is not the product of her own righteousness but is the result of Christ’s sanctifying work. It is the eschatological goal that the Church will be holy and blameless before Him.” (A Theology of the New Testament, p. 558)

- j. Overcoming means more like growing into maturity than sinless perfection:
 - i. A life increasingly conformed to Christ (Romans 8:29).
 - ii. Quick repentance and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit when sin is committed (1 John 1:9).
 - iii. Enduring trials with faith, maintaining allegiance to Christ under pressure, and overcoming compromise.

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4. Overcoming is more than getting victory over one's past

- a. We had a really great question asked at our last house church meeting:
"is the call to overcome related to overcoming our struggles from our past or does it relate to overcoming the specific issues mentioned to these 7 churches?"
- b. The answer is that it applies to the specific issues mentioned in the scriptures: the rebukes to the churches of Revelation; the challenges of the Sermon on the Mount; and the deeds of the flesh highlighted by the apostle Paul.
- c. The struggles from one's past definitely impact the issues highlighted by the scriptures so there is a connection.
- d. For example, if a person was abused as a child, there can definitely be a struggle to forgive those who abused
- e. However, we must realize that Jesus call to overcome relates to the issues written in scripture.

5. The next question we need an answer for: "How do we overcome?"

- a. The answer is: Jesus is the overcomer in us and He leads us to overcome.
- b. We must never forget that Jesus is the overcomer and He lives within us.

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

- c. We overcome by allowing the overcomer within us to overcome in and through us by faith.

1 John 5:1-4: Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

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d. Look at these quotes from Watchman Nee:

Watchman Nee: "God's intention is to obtain a bride for His Son, a bride that is without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. This is not a question of our own effort, but of the working out of the life of Christ in us." (The Glorious Church, p. 29)

Watchman Nee: "Holiness and blamelessness are the expression of Christ's life in us. The overcoming life is simply Christ Himself overcoming in us, preparing us to be presented to Him in glory." (The Overcoming Life, p. 72)

- e. To explain how to overcome, I like to use Israel taking the promise land in the book of Joshua as an illustration.
- i. Joshua means Yahweh is salvation or deliverer.
 - ii. God gave the land to the people but they had to fight for it.
 - iii. Read some verses.

*1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, **to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.** 3 **"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.** 4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 **"No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.** 6 **"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.** 7 "Only be strong and very courageous; **be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.** 8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that*

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*you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! **Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**"*

- f. Three cities speak of our journey
 - i. Jericho-the walled city
 - ii. Ai-flesh
 - iii. Covenant with the Gibeonites—agreement with the world system
 - g. Jesus had given it to them but they had to fight for the victory drawing on the victory that God had promised and Joshua had led
6. So, first, we must overcome the world, flesh and devil.

II. Faithfully maintain what you have overcome until the end.

Rev 3:11 *'I am coming quickly; **hold fast what you have**, so that no one will take your crown.*

1. The church at Philadelphia possessed the overcomer's crown so they had already overcome and the context here is to hold on to what they had already overcome.
2. The call to Philadelphia here is to persevere in faithfulness obedience to what they had overcome and to not fall away from what had been overcome.
3. We see this with Pergamum in which there was severe pressure to compromise their faith and even deny Christ. The believers at Pergamum held fast to Christ

Rev 2:13: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

4. There are many places in the scripture that calls on believers to remain faithful until the end.

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- a. *Matt 10:22: "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."*
 - b. *Matt. 24:12–13 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."*
 - c. *Rev 2:10: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*
 - d. *Rev 2:26: "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations."*
 - e. *Colossians 1:22–23: "...yet He has now reconciled you... in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."*
5. The bride will not only overcome, she will hold fast in faithful perseverance in what she has already overcome.
- a. It is so easy to overcome and then lukewarmness, busyness, temptation, or persecution leads one to shrink back.
 - b. The bride must hold fast until the end of life or the end of the age in what they have overcome.
6. Let us all pursue the overcoming lifestyle of the church at Philadelphia.