

## Summary

God is calling His end-time church to be like Philadelphia—faithful, pure, and prepared as the bride of Christ. While all believers are saved by faith, only overcomers receive eternal rewards like ruling with Christ and dwelling in the holy of holies forever. Philadelphia was the only church that had already overcome. Jesus promised them: an open door into heaven; a pillar's place in God's temple; and His new name—like a bride takes her husband's. Overcoming isn't required for salvation, but it is required for intimacy, authority, and eternal reward. Like the sons of Zadok in Ezekiel 44, faithful believers will minister to the Lord and be entrusted with His presence. Don't settle for salvation alone—become an overcomer and walk in your eternal calling.

## Summary of Dad's Message from Last Week

### a) Entering a New Season

- We're entering a season to seek renewal, awakening, a fresh hunger for Christ, and bridal readiness.
- He urged us to take the invitation seriously and stay spiritually refreshed despite vacations during the summer.
- The *Becoming the Church at Philadelphia* series are important messages focused on bridal readiness.

### b) Why Philadelphia is the Bridal Church (Rev. 3:7-13)

1. Promised a permanent dwelling place in the new Jerusalem—the city of the prepared bride (Rev. 21:2,7, 9-11).
2. Granted permanent intimacy with Christ as a pillar in the temple.
3. Given Christ's new name, like a bride taking her husband's name.
4. Only church that overcame everything.
5. Completely set apart and faithful.

### c) The Overcoming Church at the End of the Age

- Philadelphia represents the overcomers in the end times.
- Representative of the bride who has made herself ready.
- The message is prophetic and critical for those who desire to be the eternal bride of Christ.

## The Difference Between Salvation and Overcoming

### a) My Experience

- I'm currently writing a book titled *Salvation—Experience the Transforming Power of the Gospel*.
- While I have several reasons for writing this book, one of the key motivations was to clarify who the overcomers are.
- Interestingly, I initially set out to write a book about the overcomers, but I quickly realized that I couldn't clearly explain what it means to be an overcomer without first laying a solid foundation in soteriology—the doctrine of salvation.

## b) The Crucial Distinctions Between Salvation and Overcoming

- Many assume that being saved and overcoming are the same.
- Scripture makes meaningful theological and experiential distinctions between the two.
- While all believers are saved, not all believers are automatically called overcomers in Revelation.

## c) Key Distinctions

| Salvation                                   | Overcoming                                |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Spiritual birth                             | Spiritual maturity                        |
| One-time event                              | Lifetime process                          |
| Eternal life                                | Eternal rewards                           |
| Determines your eternal destination         | Determines your eternal destiny           |
| A believer in Christ                        | A disciple of Christ                      |
| One condition                               | Many conditions                           |
| Faith in Christ                             | Full submission to Christ                 |
| Faith alone, apart from works and obedience | Faith that produces works and obedience   |
| What Christ finished for you                | What the Spirit is finishing in you       |
| Christ died for you                         | You die for Christ                        |
| You are an overcomer in Christ              | You become an overcomer by experience     |
| Righteous status                            | Righteous character                       |
| Christ's absolute righteousness             | Personal progressive righteousness        |
| Declared righteous                          | Proven righteous                          |
| Sanctified in Christ                        | Transformed into Christlikeness           |
| Your inheritance in Christ                  | God's inheritance in you                  |
| Instantly become a child of God             | Gradually become a mature, Christlike son |
| Betrothed to Christ as His bride            | Made ready for Christ as His eternal wife |

## d) Overcoming involves:

- Enduring in faith and obedience
- Remaining loyal to Christ under pressure
- Walking in the Spirit and resisting sin
- Actively doing Christ's will

## e) Overcomer Description

- An overcomer is a believer who perseveres in faith, obedience, and loyalty to Jesus.
- They overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- The eternal rewards given to the overcomers are distinct honors, authority, intimacy with God, and a permanent dwelling in the holy of holies (Rev. 2:26, 3:12, 1 Cor. 3:12–15, 2 Tim. 4:8).
- Overcoming is not required for justification, but it is tied to receiving rewards in the kingdom.

## f) Examples in Scripture

- Saved But Not Overcoming
  - 1 Cor. 3:15 – Some believers' works will be burned, but they themselves "will be saved, yet so as through fire."
  - Luke 19:20–26 – A servant keeps the master's money but doesn't invest it. He remains a servant but receives no reward—only rebuke.
- Saved and Overcoming (Rev. 2-3)
  - To eat from the tree of life (2:7)
  - Authority over nations (2:26)
  - A pillar in God's temple (3:12)
  - To sit with Christ on His throne (3:21)
  - These are not conditions for salvation, but rewards for victorious, faithful living.

## g) Kingdom Citizenship vs. Kingdom Honor

- Every true believer is a citizen of the kingdom by new birth (salvation).
- Only the overcomers are honored citizens entrusted with rule, crowns, and a permanent dwelling in God's presence because they were faithful, courageous, and obedient.

## h) Other Distinctions

- All overcomers are saved, but not all the saved are overcomers.
- Salvation is a free gift. Overcoming is a calling that requires costly obedience and faithfulness.
- Being born again places you in the kingdom. Overcoming determines your reward and position in the kingdom.

## i) Summary

| Category | Salvation              | Overcoming                                                |
|----------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| How?     | By grace through faith | By faithful perseverance in obedience, love, and loyalty. |

|            |                                                         |                                                                                       |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Result?    | Forgiveness, new birth, indwelling Spirit, eternal life | Authority, crowns, deeper intimacy, ruling with Christ, access to the holy of holies. |
| Secure?    | Yes, if faith is genuine and one continues in faith.    | Conditional on perseverance, obedience, repentance, and faithfulness.                 |
| Universal? | Applies to all true believers                           | Not all believers qualify as overcomers                                               |

## How to View the Seven Churches

### 1. The Relevance of Jesus' Message to the Seven Churches

- Jesus addressed seven real first-century churches in Revelation 2–3.
- But He was also speaking to all His people throughout history—especially those living in the end times.

### 2. Why Jesus Chose These Churches

- Though many churches existed, Jesus strategically chose Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
- Possible reasons include their cultural influence, strategic location, and importance as trade and communication centers.
- Most importantly, He chose them because their specific struggles represent the core challenges believers would face throughout church history and especially in the last days.

### 3. The Unified Message of Revelation 2-3

- The letters are not isolated messages to seven different churches, but a coherent message to the entire church—past, present, and future.
- Jesus uses these seven churches to call us to overcome cold love, apostasy, false teaching, compromise, lawlessness, apathy, and self-satisfaction.
- These messages are designed to cultivate persevering faith and faithful obedience until the end.
- Jesus said seven times, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).
- He wanted each church to hear what He said to the other churches. For example, Smyrna was meant to hear the message to Ephesus—and vice versa.
- Therefore, these messages form one letter to the universal church, not merely seven letters to isolated communities.

### 4. Jesus Spoke to the End-Time Church

- Jesus' words often carry end-time significance, alluding to the events of the last days.
- To Smyrna: “You will have tribulation” (Rev. 2:10)—likely pointing to persecution during the great tribulation (Dan. 9:24–27).

- To Pergamum: "I will make war... with the sword of My mouth" (Rev. 2:16)—a probable reference to Jesus' judgment on His enemies when He returns (2 Thess. 2:8; 1:8–10).
- To Thyatira: "I will cast... into great tribulation" (Rev. 2:22 NKJV)—a likely allusion to the final 3½ years of this age (Matt. 24:21).
- To Sardis: "I will come like a thief..." (Rev. 3:3)—a reference to the day of the Lord and the coming judgment (Matt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:2).
- To Philadelphia: "I will keep you from the hour of testing..." (Rev. 3:10)—a direct allusion to the great tribulation (Luke 21:34–35).

## 5. These Churches Don't Represent Church History

- Scripture gives no indication that these churches represent sequential historical ages.
- There is nothing in the text that explicitly or implicitly suggests a prophetic timeline from Pentecost to the Second Coming.
- Jesus addresses all seven churches as contemporaries.
  - They were real, first-century congregations existing at the same time.
  - He expected each one to heed the messages given to the others (Rev. 2:7, 11, etc.).
- All seven issues have appeared repeatedly throughout church history.
- Churches in every generation have battled cold love (Ephesus), persecution (Smyrna), false teaching (Pergamum), false prophecy and moral compromise (Thyatira), spiritual deadness (Sardis), faithful perseverance (Philadelphia), and lukewarm apathy (Laodicea).
- The prophetic-history view can lead to complacency or pride.
  - For example, if someone believes Philadelphia represents them and Laodicea represents "those other compromised churches," it may foster self-assurance rather than humility and repentance.
- It weakens the personal application of the letters.
  - When the letters are treated as limited to historical eras, modern believers may overlook how Christ's words apply to their own lives and churches today.
- The call to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" is plural and timeless.
  - Jesus wanted each church—and by extension, all churches—to listen to and apply all the messages, not just their "assigned" letter.
- The end-time church resembles all seven churches, not just Laodicea.
  - The idea that only Laodicea represents the last-days church overlooks the possibility that many believers in the end times will also resemble Ephesus, Thyatira, Sardis, or Philadelphia.

## Only Philadelphia Were Overcomers

### a) Smyrna Was Still to Be Tested

- Though Smyrna was not rebuked or called to repentance, they had yet to be tested.
- Jesus said they would be tested for ten days.
- They weren't yet an overcoming church.

## b) Philadelphia Was the Only Overcoming Church

- They were faithful despite being small and not having much influence, resources, wealth, or miracle-working power.
- They had kept His word.
- They had not denied His name, even when persecuted.
- They kept the word of His perseverance, meaning they were faithful when tested and endured through trials faithfully.
- They had already qualified for the overcomer's crown.
  - Jesus said let no one take your crown—it was already theirs.
  - *Stephanos* is the Greek word for the victor's crown.
- We can rightly assume that they overcame the struggles of the other six churches.
  - Jesus didn't rebuke them or call them to repentance as He did to five other churches with struggles.

## The Overcomers' Rewards to Philadelphia

### a) What Jesus Promised Them

- Jesus said to Philadelphia that He has "the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens" (Rev. 3:7).
- He went on to say, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut" (Rev. 3:8).
- Jesus also promised them, "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" (Rev. 3:12).

### b) The Specific Rewards Enumerated Below

- "I have put before you an open door which no one can shut."
  - The open door promised to the church of Philadelphia is likely the same open door into heaven seen in Revelation 4:1.
  - This is ultimately fulfilled in Revelation 12:5 with the catching up of the manchild—a prophetic picture of the faithful, overcoming remnant.
  - This door is not primarily for earthly ministry but for heavenly escape and enthronement.

- It's a reward for enduring love, obedience, and uncompromised devotion in an age of apostasy.
- It's a promise of open access to God in the holy of holies.
- "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore."
  - A pillar speaks of stability and permanence.
  - In ancient cities (especially in earthquake-prone Philadelphia), buildings could collapse—but pillars often remained standing.
  - Jesus promises the overcomer permanence and an unshakable position in God's eternal presence.
  - A pillar also speaks of honor and recognition. In Greco-Roman culture, important citizens had pillars inscribed with their names in public temples. This implies a position of honor, identity, and remembrance before God.
  - The word for temple—*naos*—refers to the holy place and holy of holies, not to the entire temple complex.
  - This promise refers to eternal fellowship with God in the holy of holies.
  - Being a "pillar in the temple" means being a permanent fixture in God's presence in the holy of holies, part of His household forever.
  - Not going out of it anymore refers to a promise of eternal security and unbroken communion. This is a precious promise of being forever established in the holy of holies in the new Jerusalem.
- "I will write on him the name of My God."
  - This refers to being marked as the Father's inheritance—a mature, Christlike son who partakes in Christ's eternal inheritance.
- "I will write on him . . . the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God."
  - The new Jerusalem is the bridal city—the dwelling place of the bride who has made herself ready.
  - Even more amazing than the vast size of the new Jerusalem (1,500 mile cube) is what its cubic shape represents.
  - Both the holy of holies in Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple were perfect cubes (10x10x10 and 20x20x20 cubits, respectively—1 Kings 6:20).
  - Since the new Jerusalem also forms a cube, it suggests that the entire city is the holy of holies of the new heaven and new earth.
  - Though all believers have access to this city, only those who overcome and make themselves ready will dwell there forever.
- "I will write on him . . . My new name."
  - This refers to being marked as the Son's inheritance—a bride who has made herself ready.

- Just as a wife receives the last name of her husband, the prepared bride receives Christ's new name, marking her as His inheritance.

## c) These Rewards Summarized

- The overcomers will be marked by God as His inheritance and His priests, granting them an open door into heaven and into His presence, which enables them to dwell with Him in the holy of holies and to minister to Him in the fullness of His glory forever.

## The Sons of Zadok and the Overcomers

### a) The Millennial Temple

- Jesus will build the Millennial Temple in Jerusalem after His return and will dwell there as King and High Priest (Ezek. 43:7; Zech. 6:12–13).
- Nine chapters of Ezekiel (40–48) describe this future temple in detail.
- In this temple, the faithful sons of Zadok—a priesthood within the priesthood—will be uniquely honored to minister to Jesus in the holy of holies, unlike the unfaithful Levitical priests, who will be restricted to outer court service (Ezek. 44:10–16).

### b) Who Are the Sons of Zadok?

- Zadok was a high priest loyal to David during Absalom's rebellion.
- His faithfulness in the face of national compromise is honored eternally.
- The natural sons of Zadok (descendants of Levi) will serve in the Millennial Temple.
- The Lord says about the sons of Zadok:

But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me . . . they shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. (Ezek. 44:15-16)

- Because of Zadok's faithfulness, his sons will be granted unique access to God's presence in the Millennial Temple.
- They will be allowed to:
  - Enter the holy of holies
  - Minister directly to the Lord
  - Wear linen garments in His presence (Ezek. 44:17–19)

### c) The Zadok Principle

- The name Zadok (Tsadowq) in Hebrew means "righteous," reflecting the character of those who follow in his footsteps—loyal, humble, faithful, and devoted.
- Faithfulness in times of compromise grants access to the holy of holies and secures intimacy with God.

- In a time when many fall away or compromise truth, those who remain faithful to the Lord are rewarded with closeness to Him in the holy of holies of His presence.
- Intimacy with God is reserved for the faithful, not the famous.
- Zadok stayed loyal during national apostasy. Philadelphia stayed faithful in an age of spiritual decline. Those who pattern their lives after them will be rewarded with greater proximity to God and greater authority in His kingdom.

d) The Sons of Zadok and the Church of Philadelphia

- Both the sons of Zadok and the church of Philadelphia stand out as faithful groups given special access to God's presence because of their loyalty and obedience in times of compromise.
- Here's the parallel between the two.

| Sons of Zadok                                                                        | Church of Philadelphia                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zadok remained faithful when others went astray                                      | Kept Jesus' word and did not deny His name                                                                      |
| Zadok's sons given special access to minister before the Lord in the inner sanctuary | Promised an "open door" into God's presence that no one can shut                                                |
| Promised a holy of holies ministry in the Millennial Temple                          | Promised to become a pillar in the temple of God—permanent access and identity in the holy of holies            |
| Distinguished from the unfaithful priests (Levites who led others astray)            | Distinguished from the lukewarm and compromised churches like Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea |
| Represent the remnant priesthood in the Millennial Temple                            | Represent the overcoming remnant church in the end times                                                        |

- The sons of Zadok are the Old Testament shadow; the church of Philadelphia is the New Testament fulfillment of the faithful remnant.
  - Both reveal this eternal principle: Those who remain loyal to the Lord in times of compromise will be drawn near to Him and entrusted with His presence and authority.
- e) The unfaithful Levites represent saved but compromised believers. They will have a lesser ministry—serving in the outer courts, performing temple duties, but barred from the Lord's immediate presence (Ezek. 44:10–14).
- f) Like the sons of Zadok, the overcomers will:
- Minister directly to the Lord in the holy of holies.
  - Teach the difference between holy and profane.
  - Judge righteously and settle disputes.
  - Receive the Lord as their inheritance (Ezek. 44:15–28).