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**SERIES: Revelation (God's Message To The Church)**

**TITLE: Program 11 – Overcomers!**

**MONDAY**

**OPEN**

In the book of Revelation, Jesus describes Himself as, “The One from whose mouth comes the sharp two-edged sword, the word of God by which He overcomes all of His enemies.” As you look at the word, overcomers, in the Bible, you see that Jesus overcomes. The question is: What about His followers? Are His followers able to be overcomers, no matter what? That’s what we’ll talk about today.

**PART ONE**

In our last program we were looking at Jesus’ message to the church at Pergamum. And I want to go back to that message because I want to pick up something. I want to pick up that term overcomers. And I want us to look at what it means to be an overcomer, because there’s some debate on the issue. And we need to clear it up so it’s crystal clear who is an overcomer and who is not an overcomer. Let’s go back and pick up in Revelation, chapter 2,

verse 12. It says, “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this ...,” Now we know that that sharp two-edged sword is a picture of the Word of God. He says, “... I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and you have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” You know what’s so neat is as you look at this you see that here is a person who is truly an overcomer. The word overcome comes from the word n-i-k-a-o, which simply means to conquer. It means to be a victor. Well when you look at His commendation to this church at Pergamum and I skipped over that because I wanted you to see the connection between the sharp two-edged sword and His reproof against this church for the teaching that they were allowing to go on in the church, that was contrary to the Word of God and that was impacting the church. So I want us just to stop for a minute and look at the commendation that He gives them. He says, “... I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is ....” Now, if you would go to the ruins of Pergamum you would see a very, very interesting, interesting city, a city that was excavated. And back in the 1800’s, when they were doing an excavation they discovered the throne to Zeus, that sat on a hill and it was 40 feet high. Now some believe that it’s because of that throne of Zeus, because Zeus was called, so to speak, the father of the gods. He was the one that Homer had created in his mind, that blind poet. And from Zeus, I mean he was kind of the head, the chief of the gods. So it could be that this is why Jesus says where Satan’s throne dwells, where Satan’s throne is. They also had the temple to Asclepius and Asclepius was the god of healing and it was a pole with a snake on it, was his symbol and you can see even that carved in stone as you walk through the ruins of Ephesus. It was a place where they had a temple to Caesar, where they would go in and worship him. Now the center of emperor worship was in Smyrna. And what they would do is they were simply required to go in and take a pinch of incense, offer it to Caesar and say, Caesar is, catch this, the son of God. Caesar is God. They were synonymous. If he’s the Son of God, then he is a god. And then they would

receive a certificate. Well they had a temple like that there in Pergamum. And here were people who had held fast Jesus' name. Here were people who had conquered. Here were people who had not given in. And even in the days of Antipas He says, "... My witness, My faithful one who was killed among you ...." even in these days, these men and this church did not turn their back on Jesus Christ. Now they were lax about what was being taught in the church, but they were faithful to hold true to who Jesus Christ is. I want us to go to Matthew, chapter 16. And in Matthew, chapter 16 we see Jesus questioning His disciples, calling them to make sure that they understand who He is. And in Matthew, chapter 16 verse 13, it says, "As He came into the district of Caesarea Philippi ...." And that's up north and we go there when we do our tours to Israel. And we see the idols and the stands that are carved right in that source of water as it comes down off of Mt. Hermon. It's a beautiful, beautiful place. And that's where they would set their idols. And so standing in that surrounding, we read and study this passage. "And Jesus began asking His disciples saying: Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Now the Son of Man, remember, was a term used to describe the one in Daniel, chapter 7, to whom was going to be given glory and honor and dominion forever and ever. So He says, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist and others Elijah, but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' And He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" I'm the Son of Man; who do you say that I am? The others are saying I'm Elijah or Jeremiah, but who do you say that I am? "And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Zeus was a figment of man's imagination, as Acts says when Paul speaks to those in Athens. He was a product of the art and the thought of man. They developed what they thought Zeus would look like and they made a statue. He came from the conception of a man whose mind had turned away from God and who was just a blind poet writing this poetry that caught the imagination of people. He called Zeus a god and so they believed it. This is where these people, this church at Pergamum is dwelling. They're dwelling where Satan's throne is and they

have remained faithful. They're saying Thou art the Christ. And yet there's going to be conflict. And you and I have to know that there will always be conflict because there are two kingdoms in this world. There's the kingdom of Satan and there's the kingdom of God. There's the kingdom of darkness; there's the kingdom of light. And all mankind falls into one of those kingdoms. There's no riding the fence as I told you before. All right now, Jesus comes down and He says to Peter, in verse 18, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, Petros, a little stone ...," He says, "... and upon this rock, Petra ...," and that rock is the fact that Jesus is the rock, that He is God. He says, "... I will build My church." I'm building my church, not on Peter; I'm building My church on the truth of the fact that I am the Christ, that I am the Messiah, that I am the Promised One, that I am the Son of the living God; I am the Son of Man and there is no other. And so He says, "... I will build My church on that truth." And then He says this: "The gates of Hades shall not overpower it." In other words, no matter what the conflict, no matter the fact that the world is going to hate you, as Jesus says in John 15, "No matter that the world hates you, you can know that it hated you because it hated Me ...," But He says, "... be of good cheer; I ...," listen, "... I have overcome the world. I have conquered the world. I have overcome the world." Ah, is there a connection between knowing who Christ is and standing fast and standing in opposition to a world that won't buy that truth and overcoming? Yes, there is a connection. And that's what we're going to see as we go on. Now I want us to go back for just a minute to, Revelation, chapter 2. And I want us to remember what we just saw. We saw in the letter to Smyrna that there is no reproof to that church, because they are a suffering church. And as we saw in 1 Peter 4 in verses 1 to 2 that, "... he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Now we see that there was suffering also, and this is important so that you understand that as we go on, as we study the church at Laodicea and the church at Sardis, where there was no suffering. But as we look at it we find that these people are in a conflict. And they are in a conflict but they have not denied the faith, even though one has been killed. I want to take you back for just a minute because I want you to get

this book. I want you to read it. It's called the Heavenly Man and it won the Book of the Year Award in 2003. And I picked it up in England. And I picked it up because of the story that someone told me of Brother Yong. Brother Yong was in prison. Now this was not his first imprisonment. He's been in prison many, many times. The latest time was the year 2002 I believe, when he was just released, 2001 or 2002. But one time when he was in prison God spoke to him after a number of days and said you must escape. And he says how can I escape? Nobody's escaped out of this prison. And He said I will show you. And then another prisoner came to him and said today, you must escape, so he knew it was a confirmation from the Lord. So the cell door opens when he goes out to do his bathroom duties and it opens up and he just begins to walk. Well as he's walking, all of a sudden the cell door in front of him that's all dark and shaded windows, all of a sudden opens because another prisoner is coming in. As that other prisoner comes in, the phone rings and the guard goes to the phone so his back is turned, and he keeps walking. Then he picks up a broom; he goes out to the outer court and when he gets out there the doors that go to the outer courtyard again, those doors, which are normally locked and high security, are all of a sudden opened, as someone else comes through. He says I walked right past them and it's as if the guard is blind. But then he gets out into the courtyard and what happens when he gets out into the courtyard? I'll tell you after this pause.

## **PART TWO**

I know that you want to know what happened to this Chinese Brother Yong when he was told by God that he was to walk out of that prison, that he was to escape and when these doors miraculously opened. Well, when he walked through that door that led him out into the courtyard, the guard was looking at him, but he never stopped him. He said he was looking at him, but it was like he never saw him, like he was in an absolute daze. He took his broom and he walked across that long courtyard, now to the final iron doors, the

doors that are never opened and miraculously those doors were standing open. He laid down the broom; he walked out through those gates, out on to the city streets and there was a taxi right in front of him. And the man said, can I give you a ride? And he said yes, this is where I want you to take me. And when he got there he found out that the church had been fasting and praying because one of the women had a vision from God in her dreams that God was going to release Brother Yong. This man has suffered greatly. One of his imprisonments he was in fasting and prayer, no food, no water for a miraculously 74 days, until God released him. He didn't say a word. He just laid there and for 74 days he went without food and water. But he was a man that knew God's direction. But this is what he says about suffering: He said, "The first time I went to prison I struggled wondering why God allowed it. Slowly I began to understand that He had a deeper purpose for me than just me working for Him. He wanted me to know Him and I wanted to know Him deeply and intimately. He knew the best way to get my attention for a while was to give me rest behind bars." And then he says, "Whenever I hear about a Christian being in prison for Christ, I don't advise people to pray for his release unless the Lord clearly reveals that it should be this way." And then he tells about a chicken. He says, "A chicken has to stay in an egg for 21 days. But if he's taken out earlier than 21 days, he will die." In other words suffering has a purpose. And even in suffering and this is what I want you to understand, "there's no trial or testing or temptation taken you which is more than you can bear, but God will always provide a way of escape that you can bear it." All right now, what I want us to do is I want us to go to the end of this message to the church of Pergamum. And it says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him who overcomes." Now as I said, every letter ends that way. To him who overcomes, to him who conquers, to him who has the victory, to him who triumphs, rather than is triumphed over, "... to him I will give some of the hidden manna. And I will give him a white stone, and on that white stone a new name, which no one knows except the one that receives it." And when He says this in this particular church, it's very hard

to understand what He means by the hidden manna. And yet in the light of the fact that out of Jesus' mouth comes the sharp two-edged sword I think that what He's saying is that those that overcome know God more intimately. We know that in reference to manna, God says, "I fed you with manna because I wanted you to understand that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." So He promises them hidden manna. He promises them a white stone. Now white stone was often used for admission to certain events or it was given as a prize. And then the new name that's written on it, it means new in character. You and I in that new heaven and new earth are going to have a new name. But what is an overcomer? Well in John, chapter 16 Jesus says in verse 33, "In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And then if you go to Revelation, chapter 5, when they're looking for someone who can take the scroll and break its seals and take that title deed to the earth and reclaim it out of the power of Satan and give it back to man, because it was given to man in the first place. It says, "Stop weeping ...," in verse 5, "... behold the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to take the book and break its seven seals. The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the One from the Root of David, Jesus has overcome. And He is able to take that and to break its seals." And so who are the overcomers? Well I think the answer is found in 1 John, also a book that is written by the apostle that wrote the book of Revelation of course, under the dictation of God Almighty. Now listen to what it says. In verse 4: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world..." Now remember the world's the enemy. The world's the one that doesn't like God. It's the gates of hell that are going to try to overpower the church. But the gates of hell cannot overpower it because it is God's church. And so in verse 4 it says, "... whatever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith." So an overcomer is a person that believes in God. An overcomer is a person who believes in Jesus Christ. An overcomer is the one who knows that He is the Messiah and who is the one who overcomes the world? "But He..." verse 5,

“... who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” So when you go through Revelation and you follow what He says in each of these verses as He brings each message to the church to a conclusion it becomes obvious, if you’ll say okay, this is what happens and this is what belongs to the overcomer. Then if they’re not an overcomer then they’re going to miss it. And then you begin to see clearly that every believer, whoever is born of God is an overcomer. Oh there may be times when we’re weak. There may be times when we fail. There may times as “The Heavenly Man” when we get so busy for God, that we neglect the Word of God and God then does something in our lives to draw us back to Him, but we overcome. We triumph. Look at Revelation, chapter 2, verse 7: “To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.” So this belongs to the believer. But if you don’t overcome then you’re not going to be in the Paradise of God and you’re not going to be able to eat of the tree of life. When you come down to the word, to the message at the church at Smyrna, He says in verse 11: “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” And you and I saw that the second death, Revelation 20, the last verse says that, “... the lake of fire is the second death.” And so what He’s saying is those that overcome will never go into hell and never be cast into the lake of fire because they’ve been born of God, because they believe God. And then you come down to the one that we have just seen. And it’s a little bit more difficult to interpret, but there is hidden manna, this is the bread that has come down out of heaven from God. This is the manna. “Moses gave you manna in the morning, but that manna disappeared. But God has given you manna and that manna is the Word of God. It’s the Lord Jesus Christ. And he who eats of Him and he who drinks of Him will never hunger or never thirst again.” And what do you get? You get a white stone, a white stone with your name on it, a new name on it that is a sign that you’ve won the prize that you deserve admission into the kingdom of heaven.