

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## Conquer, or Be Conquered!

by Dan Trygg

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

John 16:33

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Rom. 12:2

"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For to whatever a person is overcome, to that he is enslaved."

II Peter 2:19

"...every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

1John 4:3-4

"...you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

1John 2:14

"He who is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory overcoming the world-- our faith."

1John 5:4

**In the mundane things of everyday life, it is easy to forget that we are in a battle, a struggle for our souls, for our calling and purpose for being here, for our usefulness to God and benefit to others, and even for our very lives! The Bible speaks of "overcoming". The word literally means "to win, to gain mastery over, to prevail, to be victorious, to conquer, to defeat, to subdue, to gain success, to be a victor, to become a champion, to vanquish, to carry the day, to overpower". *Sure sounds like there is some opposition out there, doesn't it?* At the very least, there are negative forces or pressures which must be overcome. It could also mean that there are intelligent hostile forces that are working against us, which must be defeated. Of course, the Bible indicates that both of these scenarios are very real. **There are natural internal pressures which must be tamed, external influences that must be resisted, and human and spiritual enemies which must be recognized, warded off, and sometimes even opposed and defeated.** If we do not address these detrimental influences, they could eventually wear us down, rob us of our time, energy and resources, disorient and subdue us enough so that our lives become reduced, diminished and of little impact for Christ. **We must go on the offensive, or we will be deceived, controlled and entrapped by things that are set against God's purposes for our lives. We are at war. We must conquer, or be conquered.****

**The first area of our struggle is *within* ourselves.** We are born with a natural self-focus. It is virtually all we know and can relate to. All we are aware of is whether we are comfortable, or not. As we grow, we become more aware of what we want, and how to obtain it. Eventually, we develop the ability to articulate our desires, and to physically obtain what we want. **We have to learn to curb or restrain our self focus. We have to learn to control our appetites and bodily functions.** We have to learn to share. **We learn to delay gratification. It is normal for children to have to learn to control their tempers and emotions.** We learn the complexities of social interaction, part of which is *not* saying everything you think or feel about a person whenever you feel like it. The Bible says that "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will drive it from him" (Prov. 22:15). **Good parents will teach their children to exercise self-control in these areas.**

**The apostle John delineated three basic avenues of personal temptation: the appeal of physical pleasure and comfort, the draw of beautiful things, and self-aggrandizement (I Jn. 2:16).** As far back as Genesis, we see that **our first parents were drawn by the attractiveness of the forbidden fruit.** It was pleasing to the eye, and looked like it would be good to eat. **They thought that eating it would bring them pleasure and personal advancement. *Instead, it brought untold loss,* ...pain, grief, estrangement, and even death. Later, Cain was warned about mastering his emotions.** He had become embittered and jealous toward Abel, and was nursing that resentment. God told him, "Why are you angry? And why is your expression downcast? If you do what is good, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not behave well, sin is crouching at the door; and *it desires to dominate you,* but you must master it" (Gen 4:6-7). We know the outcome. **Cain was overcome by his resentment.** He plotted his brother's murder. Again, **what seemed like it would bring about a better world for Cain,** a world where he would not have to deal with comparing himself to his brother's better example, **actually brought him untold misery and anguish.** "There is a way that *seems* right to a person, but it leads to death," says the proverb (Prov. 14:12). Not everything that looks good *is* good. ***Appetites and emotions.* It is amazing how many of us are hijacked in these areas.** We may have disciplined ourselves enough to survive, and seemingly do well in life, but we don't recognize that these same inner drives *still* push many of us into areas of compromise, defeat and ruin. There may even have been times in our lives where we had been very disciplined, in pursuit of an earthly goal. **Over the years, however, we have become lax, and are now self-indulgent.** We have put on weight, or picked up life consuming habits, like smoking, drinking or using drugs. At the time, **these may seem like simple, low-cost pleasures, but over**

**time they steal our health, energy, and may even cut short our lives.** We think, “It will never happen to me”, but our family members, friends and neighbors are clearly showing the signs of dis-ease, and some have even died. **We may have had to endure very painful experiences in life, but have chosen to avoid working through those in healthy ways,** choosing instead to stuff the pain and focus our energies in some other “more positive” direction, whether self-medication or self-achievement. **In the short term, it seems like stuffing or ignoring the pain is the better choice.** **In the end, however, the emotional wounds keeps festering** in brokenness, depression, bitter resentments and unforgiveness, or we find ourselves in cycles of unhealthy relationships, seemingly unable to find happiness. **Those who try to medicate their pain with chemicals or other addictions find that they offer momentary escape, but do not solve anything.** In fact, the addictive cycle usually compounds the pain, loss and cost the person is carrying.

We need to recognize this bigger picture. Unfortunately, when you are in the middle of it all, it is difficult to see what is happening. **There are moments of truth, however, which God provides. These are little glimpses of reality, or sanity, when we ask ourselves, “What’s happening to me? How did I get here?”** Or, even better, when we can see these things happening in *other* peoples’ lives, and we are not yet too heavily entrenched in the consequences and bondages of these choices, ...**when we have that glimpse of reality, we need to ask ourselves, “Am I going to let myself be destroyed in this way, or am I going to fight back? Am I going to be conquered by these things, or am I going to turn this around and become an overcomer?”**

**The second area of attack is external to us, but it is all around us. This has to do with the mindset and values of the world system.** The word used to describe this is *kosmos*, which means “an organized system”. **It is the propaganda machine of the devil,** as he works through the minds and imaginations of people. **It is the messages and values supported by political and business interests, and by godless society, to support and promote their interests, which are often diametrically opposed to God’s.** We all are inundated by advertising, images and ideas every day, which are designed to direct us to believe certain things, act in accordance with the norms of the larger society, and *convince us that it is in our best interests to quietly do our jobs, purchase goods, save for retirement and not cause any disturbance to the status quo.* **We are to find our place in society and quietly carry out our responsibilities. Again, at one level, this all seems good and right, but much of our society’s successes are at the expense of other people.** There is injustice all around us, but we do not even consider it. **Moreover, in order to “fit in” and do as we are expected to do, we must go against the leadings of the Holy Spirit, because the world system is at enmity with God.** It is hostile to God. To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4). **We are not to love the world, or be conformed to it** (I Jn. 2:15-17; Rom. 12:2). **We are to overcome its propagandizing, conforming influence.** *It is our faith in Christ that enables us to begin to see the truth.* To believe *at all* is already a victory over the world’s mind-numbing influence, because it wants to keep us from a true knowledge of God (I Jn. 5:4). **Worldly influences in the church and in Christian circles are quick to attempt to mollify any new excitement for the things of God.** Instead of encouraging us to be fervent (boiling) in the Spirit, they try to calm us down and throw cold water on our red hot zeal. **Why? Because they are influenced by worldly fears, and our zeal seems to threaten their comfortable compromise between the world and their faith. They have been overcome, conquered by worldly values, messages and philosophies, and they probably don’t even realize it.** If we are following Christ, the world will hate us, because it hated Him. Just like Cain was envious of the faith of his brother, so the world will hate and despise those who truly serve God. **We could be doing nothing wrong, at all, but we would still be an offense to them, because we are a mirror that shows them their own lack of devotion and obedience to God.** We are not to allow the world system to shape and mold our minds or our lives. We are to follow Jesus Christ. **Our faith in Him, and our pursuit of Him, will lead us to overcoming the deceptions and bondages of this world system.**

**The final source of attack is from Satan and his forces.** Obviously, he works through and exploits our fleshly appetites, our emotions and our pride. He also works through the world system, the surrounding culture that he manipulates to make it difficult for people to discover and follow Christ. In addition to these secondary means, however, **the powers of Satan can attack us directly, injecting thoughts into our minds.** It is clear from Ephesians 6:10-20 and II Cor. 10:3-6 that there is a spiritual war directed against us. It is primarily at the level of our thought life, because **if Satan can control or influence our thoughts, he will succeed in influencing our choices and the outcome of our lives.** *Thus, we need to guard our hearts and minds, and we need to evaluate our thoughts.* When we uncover thoughts, ideas, or arguments within our minds which are counter to God’s truth, **we are to not allow these thoughts to play out in our minds. We are to “arrest” them, take them captive and assert the truth in their place.** We overcome the enemy’s attacks, lies and deceptions by returning fire with the truth of God’s word. **At times, it is appropriate to rebuke the enemy and tell him to leave, as you take your stand on the word of God.** It is important to consciously draw near to God as your shield and protector, and know that you stand delivered and protected by Christ’s death on your behalf (Jas. 4:7,8; I Pet. 5:7,8; Rev. 12:11).

You can be trampled, or you can triumph. You can *be* overcome, or you can be *an overcomer*. It’s up to you.