

## Talks – Palm Sunday - Overcoming

### Luke 4.1-14 – Overcoming

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.' "

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' "

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: " 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' "

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

### Full of the Holy Spirit – the overcomer

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. For many years, he was being prepared. We know that he had grown in stature and wisdom. Luke 2.40 says "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." Are we like this? The ministry of Jesus was in a time of transition and change. He was moving forwards into God's main plan for his life. He had found favour with God, Luke 3.22, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased". To overcome, we must be positioned for God's favour.

Question is, are we filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit? Are we living submitted lives of obedience? Do we hear God's voice in the small and the major areas of life – and when we do, do we respond?

So often when we move forward in life, we come to a challenge that we have to overcome. But often we back down. I used to have a dream climbing up a steep cliff but never made it. One day I made it and have never had that dream since.

Your challenges will be different, but they will come. And you will have to face up to those challenges and overcome them. We have the power within us to do this. Romans 8.36-37 was written in the context of not being separated from God, and about going through challenges:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

Your challenge will be unique, your Red Sea will come. But God will make a way.

If you listen to many TV speakers on GOD TV, you may get the impression that life is simply about good things. While Jesus did come to give us life til it overflows, this is an incomplete message. There are times where we are led into something that is hard, but necessary for God to get us through to where we need to be – often as a result of our prayers!

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, yet he had to go through a hard time. God knew that the devil would attack and tempt Jesus, but he also knew he would come through.

1 Corinthians 10.13 says, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

Very often, it is God himself who allows or at least uses challenges to refine us. After all, he is like a master potter and metalworker, refining us like gold and silver. God wants us to enjoy our life, even in the hard times. Do we have the joy of the Lord that overcomes the world?

*(Joyce Meyer illustrates this point about being shaped by God by using a cutter in the shape of a gingerbread man with some dough around it. Keeping the cutter in the centre of the dough, she plucks off the bits of dough outside of the cutter and pretends to be the person having bits plucked off them by God – saying ‘ouch’ etc. When all the bits are gone, you are left with the dough in the shape of the gingerbread man. She manoeuvres the dough out of the cutter shape to reveal a nicely made man – and says ‘aaah, looks good’ – our response when we see what God has made us. You should use this kind of illustration – or use playdough!)*

As one preacher has said, this reminds us of when God led the people of Israel into the wilderness. Why did he do this? He wanted to see what was in their hearts and to see whether they would be loyal to him or not (Deut. 8:2-3). Same with you and your church.

Maybe you have been led into a difficult place or allowed to enter because God wants to use it to do something new, to move you forward. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses went for 40 days with God, Elijah ran for 40 days and nights. God was doing something in his people. We also have to keep on fasting and praying, seeking God.

Exodus 34.28 – Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

What has God written, what is he writing on your heart? Let's move forward into this, not backwards. Pressing on.

Jesus had been out in the desert for a long time and would have been hungry and possibly even physically weakened. The evil one offered to meet his need for food, at a time when he was weakened. The first temptation in tough times is to revert to previous patterns of behaviour to go back to what we know, or to fulfil the desires of the flesh. This may mean acting selfishly regarding church or people around.

But Jesus said in Matthew 4.4, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

So when the enemy comes, our place is not our past, but in our Father in heaven. Only he sustained Jesus and Moses. Only he can sustain us. Like Jesus, living on God's Word, we must look to what is spiritual (God's Word), not what is carnal (bread). Life comes from the mouth of God alone.

## So how do we overcome?

1 John 5.4-5 in The Amplified Version says: For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith. Who is it that is victorious over [that conquers] the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on that fact]

We overcome through Jesus and because of what he has done for us.

Luke 10:19 – "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."

Finally, Jesus says this in John 16:33 – "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus has overcome the world. As we stay connected and obedient to him, we can also overcome as we persevere, hold on, live the life God has for us and keep on keeping on!!