

WCCC2013

Watch and Overcome 2

Brothers Overcame Him

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Good morning brothers and sisters. Let us turn to a few scriptures.

Revelations 12: 10 – 11. *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

Here I would like to underline 'they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony'. Now this blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony are so important to them that they do not love their lives to the death.

I Kings 19: 14. *Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."*

Here I would like to underline 'Your covenant, Your altar and Your prophets'. Also I would like to say that in some other bible versions, the word 'zealous' for the Lord is translated as 'jealous' for the Lord. John 14: 30. *I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;*

I would like to underline 'he has nothing in Me'.

Daniel 9: 16. *O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us.*

I would like to underline 'Your righteousness'; I would like to say that in the Chinese translation there are the words 'da ren'. These words are not in the original version because in Chinese the word 'ren' means love. But in verse 16 the only word here should just be 'righteousness'; Your righteousness, Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain and Your people.

Isaiah 60: 15. *Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation.*

This verse is related to the verse that we just read in Daniel 9. I would like to underline 'eternal excellence, a joy from generation to generation'.

Revelations 3: 9 – 12. *Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. 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. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 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.*

This is about the church in Philadelphia. I would like to underline 'I would make them come and bow down at your feet'.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we come to You this morning, we want to see Your face. We thank You for Your grace and Your mercy that we can come together this time. You have moved our hearts to know that indeed we have to look up to wait for Your return. That we ought to live a different life and wait for Your return as long as it is today. Lord this morning, the verses we have read are those from Your heart for Your church, for Your people and for Your own glory. So Lord, we put these words before You. May Your Holy Spirit shine upon them that they become ours. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, the topic that was assigned to me is 'Watch and Overcome'. And this morning our topic is 'Brothers Overcame Him'. Yesterday we have reminded ourselves that our Lord is coming and He is at the door. We have read scriptures that encourage us to conduct our lives differently today; face to face with Him so that we can prepare for His coming.

One of the scriptures that we read yesterday was the apostle Paul's last words to Timothy. It was in 2 Timothy 2: 7 – 8, where Paul said 'I have fought the good fight'. That 'good fight' is a spiritual conflict from long, long ago. That conflict is between God's people, the brethren and God's enemy, Satan. The history of this conflict and the stories of these brothers who overcame have been written in the bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament. This morning we wish first to look at the nature of this conflict and also 'our Lord has overcome'. Then we will hone in on this verse in Revelation 12: 11. We will see how the brothers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. And then we will see how the brothers overcame him by the word of their testimony.

In Revelation 12: 5 – 9 we saw that the male child was raptured to the throne and Satan was thrown down. And then we read in verses 10 and 11 that a loud voice came from heaven. It basically said that the kingdom of God has come, His power has come, and His Christ is in authority and then it said the brothers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their own testimony and that they did not love their life even until death. We see one thing; we see a picture there. The throne of God, the authority of Christ and these brothers; they are all one. They are in victory. This is wonderful, brothers and sisters. None of these brothers overcame by themselves. There is the throne of God and there is the authority of Christ. These brothers were never alone.

Who are the accusers accusing? What is really in their mind when they accuse? When they accuse the brothers, they have a bigger target. The target is God Himself; His position, His throne and His purpose. In Job chapter 1 when Satan accused Job before God, he asked God, 'Does Job fear You for nothing? If You touch his properties, he will curse You to Your face'. Now what was Satan saying? He was saying Job feared You not because of Your righteousness; not because of Your holiness. It is because of benefit. Dear brothers and sisters, Satan was really challenging the throne of God when he accused our brother Job.

In Zachariah 3, it talked about the time when the first wave of the remnant returned. There was Joshua the high priest. Now satan accused Joshua before God and God answered, 'Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebukes you. The Lord rebukes you, Satan'. What he said here was this: satan actually was mocking at God's purpose; because God's purpose at that time was Jerusalem. Here we see the enemy accusing the brothers but the real target is God Himself; God's holiness, God's righteousness, God's throne and God's purpose. We thank the Lord. Job did not go along. From the third chapter of Job onward, satan disappeared and Job went on to discover the splendor of God's way. We also see that the Lord had protected Joshua the high priest. The Lord put a clean robe over Joshua and also assured him the purpose of Jerusalem would be met. No matter what, we see that the purpose of satan is not the brothers he was accusing, it is the Lord Himself.

This picture actually is more fully displayed in another place in the bible. It was at the time of Elijah. At the time of Elijah, king Ahab, the wicked king and his wife Jezebel had hundreds of prophets who worshipped idols. Satan used them to actually have control over Israel and to lure away a great majority of the Israelites. Here came Elijah. Elijah reported to God. He said 'the children of Israel had forsaken Your covenant, destroyed Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword'. Elijah could not stand it. Why were the covenant, the altars and the prophets so important?

Covenant is important to them because covenant was a relationship between God and His people. 'I shall be your God and you shall be my people'. When the covenant was gone, the relationship was gone. Why was the altar so important? The altar was where the Israelites came to call upon the name of the Lord.

The altar was also where the Israelites came to be with God. In Psalms 43, the psalmist said 'I come to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy'. This is wonderful. They could not be without the altar. And another psalmist, in Psalms 84, said 'the birds find their nest, and the swallows find a place where they can lay their own'. The Israelites were saying 'the altar is my home and my home for my kids; eternal relationship'. Just like Elijah said, they have let down the altars. And then they killed the prophets. The prophet was where the word of God was heard. They did not have the bible then. The Lord spoke to His people through the prophets. With the prophets gone, the word of God was no more. This was the situation that Elijah was reporting to the Lord.

Elijah was so smart. He knew Satan's purpose was to cut off the relationship between God and His people completely, leaving no trace now and forever. So he could not stand that. Brothers and sisters, Elijah said, Lord I am jealous for you. Brothers and sisters, jealousy is a very strong word. We do not want to use that word. But the bible uses that word again and again in the strongest sense. The Lord Jehovah in the second commandment said 'I am a jealous God'. He was jealous for His people and our Lord Jesus was jealous when He came to the house of God. He saw this merchandise and the bible said, 'His jealousy was like burning fire for His father's house'. And the apostle Paul said to the brothers in Corinth, 'I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God'. Brothers and sisters, the Lord told Elijah, 'I have left for myself seven thousands who have not bent their knees to Baal'. Elijah and these seven thousands were not together. Elijah was hidden by God for three years. He did not know things that had happened outside. He thought it was only he himself. But now the Lord told him, there were seven thousands. Praise the Lord. It had to be a tremendous encouragement to Elijah. Brothers and sisters, you think that seven thousand is a lot of people. But at that time in Israel, just a few years earlier, at the time of David, he had a census and there were eight hundred thousand fighting men in Israel. So this was less than one percent. And yet this people had a jealousy for God. God's right has to be protected; God's throne in our heart has to be protected.

Now brothers and sisters, when we read the bible, over the generations all those people who could not tolerate God's right being compromised had this jealousy. Brothers and sisters what does jealousy mean to you and me? Is God the first place in our heart? Is there a comparison with Him? When there is a conflict where do we stand? Do we stand on His side or do we stand on the enemy's side. Do we stand on His side or do we stand on the side of the world? Do we stand on His side or do we stand on our side? Do we stand on his side or do we stand on my side? Brothers and sisters, unless we have the jealousy for God there is no overcoming to talk about because the conflict is between God and His enemy. We have to stand on His side. We cannot ask Him to stand on our side. We have to stand on His side. We cannot ask Him to stand on my side.

We thank the Lord that there was this remnant in the Old Testament that had this jealousy for God. They had this spirit of jealousy of Elijah. And then when we come to the New Testament, there are these overcomers. They also have this jealousy for God, regardless of me, regardless of us. Thank the Lord for that. Now the remnant in the Old Testament and the overcomers in the New Testament all gave the same testimony. In Romans 11:5, Paul actually connected them together in the present time also; there has been the remnant according to the election of grace.

Coming to the time of Jesus when the Lord Jesus came, the conflict was getting more severe. When our Lord Jesus was born, the enemy tried to kill Him. The king of Judah at that time ordered all children under two years old be killed. And then when the Lord was thirty years old and came out to serve, satan tempted Him saying, worship me and gain the world. And the Lord Jesus said, worship God only and He only should you serve. And when the Lord wanted to go to the cross, satan said, no, do not go to the cross. And the Lord Jesus said 'satan get behind me'. And when the Lord Jesus was on the cross, the soldiers and the people and priests, said, 'if You are the king of the Jews You should come down'. But the Lord said no. The Lord stayed there for the purpose of God; for my salvation and for your salvation. So the Lord's victory was completed.

It is so complete that we can use it today in our fight. I just want to mention one aspect of it. It has to do with the world. The Lord Jesus said, 'the prince of the world has come. But he has nothing in me'. Brothers and sisters, the world is invasive. Now we think the world is Wall street, Main street, or Disneyland. But apostle John did not think so. In I John he said, 'the things of the world, which is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of this life'. Brothers and sisters, the world is not only out there. The world is mainly here in us. The world is invasive. If you love the world, the love of the father is not there anymore. Now the world is very invasive. The bible tells us there is the wisdom of the world, there is the spirit of the world and there is the god of the world. The wisdom of the world is given in 1 Corinthians 2:6. The wisdom in the world is against the wisdom of God. If you let it come in, you will think the wisdom of God is not very convincing. The spirit of the world is one step further; it is against the spirit of God and it is in 1 Corinthians 2: 12. There it said through the spirit of God we can receive all blessings and all things from God freely. But if the spirit of the world comes in, it will stop the flow of all spiritual blessing that had come by God's grace. You will despise grace and the spiritual blessings. You will despise the eternal purpose of God. You will despise the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is how invasive the spirit of the world is. And then there is the god of this world. It is in 2 Corinthians 4: 4. It said if the god of the world comes in, he will blind our eyes so that we cannot see the glory of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters if we cannot see the glory of Christ, even though we go to the meetings and worship on Sunday and to all these activities, it is but a religion. But if we see the glory of Christ, everything changes color. So brothers and sisters, the world is invasive. You think you can play

the world? The world actually plays you. You think you can go to the world wherever you want? You think if you want to go with God, you can go with God and if you want to go with the world, you can go with the world? Brothers and sisters, it does not happen that way. The world is invasive. You think you can control the world? He can control you for sure. So the Lord Jesus said the world has nothing in me. The prince of the world has nothing in me. Brothers and sisters, our best defense to this invasion is to say with our Lord, the world has nothing in me. So we thank the Lord.

We want to take a look at what Revelations 12 said. We will first look at 'the brothers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb' and after that we will look at 'the brothers overcame him by the word of their testimony'. What Revelations 12 said is that the blood of the Lamb is very, very powerful. It is very, very assuring. It is the ground where we stand. We overcome depending on it. Now in the bible, it said the blood is the blood of the covenant. In the Old Testament very early on, and when the Lord started to deal with the Israelites, the Lord told Moses that the blood is the blood of the covenant. It is in Exodus chapter 24. And then when we come to the New Testament, in Hebrews 9:25, it said this is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you. So the blood is covenant. And covenant is a relationship between us and God.

The first time something like this showed up is the story of Abel. The Lord accepted or looked upon Abel and his sacrifice. Now oftentimes we only look at his sacrifice. But the bible said the Lord looked upon Abel and his sacrifice. And the Lord did not look upon Cain and his offer. So Abel and his sacrifice were one. From the eyes of the Lord, He saw Abel and his sacrifice. The sacrifice was the lamb slain. So when the Lord saw the lamb, the Lord saw the heart of Abel. Even when the Lord saw Abel, the Lord saw the lamb. They were one in the sight of God. How about in the sight of Abel? This lamb was his sin offering because he knew from his father and his mother, years ago that they sinned against the Lord. And yet the Lord kept them alive until today. So Abel used this lamb to say sorry to the Lord for his dad and for his mom and for himself. So when the Lord saw Abel, when the Lord saw this lamb, the Lord saw they were together. When Abel offered this lamb, Abel was also offering himself. He was saying to the Lord, Lord I am yours. I belong to you.

Brothers and sisters, these are sin offering and burnt offering; I come to you, I am a sinner, I come to you I offer myself to you. The Lord saw that. Therefore He accepted him. He accepted his offering. Brothers and sisters, it is very, very deep. Throughout the generations, oftentimes we said their offerings were just a ritual. It was not. In the old times for the people who really loved the Lord, when they brought their offerings to the Lord, the Lord also gave them access. The Lord said, 'every year you come to me three times; you cannot come empty handed; you have to bring your sacrifice'. The Lord gave them access; and they could come to the Lord. For those who loved the Lord, every time when they gave an offering, every time when they gave a sacrifice, they thought about the love of the Lord. They thought

I am a sinner. They told the Lord, 'I have not much to give you, I can only give you myself, and it is in this thing the lamb'.

And earlier when the Lord had Moses bring the Israelites out of Egypt, all of the Israelites could have died without the Passover Lamb. The Lord said, 'I will give you this lamb. Each family has to kill the lamb and put the blood on the door. When the killer angel comes, he will pass you by and you will be delivered'. And then when they came to the desert, the Lord said, 'you have to remember that I brought you and I delivered you out of the land of Egypt into freedom'. So the Israelites who really loved the Lord could never forget this. When Joshua came into the land of Canaan; the first year when they had the opportunity, they came together to keep the Passover. For Zerubbabel too, the first time they had a chance after they came back to Jerusalem so many years, yes, the first time they had a chance, they kept the Passover. Why? It is because the blood of the lamb, the lamb itself was so very important to them. The bible actually said in Revelation 13:8 that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the earth. It is God's tremendous love to His people and to all mankind. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the earth. So that was why I think, when Abel offered the lamb, it struck a chord in his heart. It was a covenant. It was a covenant with God. It was a covenant based on His love. It was the same for all these Israelites who love God in the Old Testament time. Even though at that time they did not know the term 'the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the earth', yet they knew in their heart that there was something internal that God did and something eternal that God did. They could not get over it. That was where they stayed. There was the bond that could not be separated by anything.

Brothers and sisters, what do we do every time we have the chance to break bread together? The Lamb has died for us. He has shed His blood for us. And now His blood is our covenant. Every time we come together to break bread, we remember Him, we offer ourselves to Him, we witness once again His victory. He can save a wicked man like me. He can make a hopeless man like me identify with Him. Here everyone sees the sin offering; everyone also sees the burnt offering. The Lord is everything to us. So we really thank the Lord. The bond cannot be separated. That is the strength of the covenant. That is the basis of our victory.

That was why years and years ago, Elijah and his seven thousand had refused to bend their knees to Baal. And then we come to the story of Daniel and his three friends. They were taken captive to the palace of Babylon when they were young. Now the Babylon people wanted to turn them into Babylonians. Although they were very, very young, yet in their heart there was the covenant. The covenant was so important to them that they did not want themselves to be defiled. They wanted to keep themselves pure for the Lord. By faith they told the Babylonians to give them ten days. They were not going to eat what the Babylonians wanted them to eat. They drank only water and ate only vegetables and they would wait to see what would happen. The Lord answered their prayers. From that time on, they kept themselves for

the Lord. No one could move them. Brothers and sisters, the blood of the Lamb is the basis of our victory. No one can take that away.

And now we will talk about the word of their testimony. Brothers and sisters, the emphasis is on their testimony and not the word. The emphasis is their testimony. It is the word about their testimony. What were they testifying? If you look at the remnant and you look at the Israelites who loved the Lord and who had this jealousy for the Lord, their testimonies were their own personal testimonies. It was so important. It was about something that was most important in their life. And the most important thing in their life was the greatness of God. It is that His throne is in me. He has loved me. And also His purpose is excellent; it is exceedingly excellent. So their word of testimony is on these things. Now in the Old Testament time, they did not know this word Christ Jesus. But this was pretty much in their hearts. There was something of God. There was something that God had given to us. It was more glorious than we could say. But it was not abstract. It was very concrete. It was here inside. No one could take away. Brothers and sisters, Christ is expressed by a few of them in His church. There was something of God that was more than they could say in this remnant, these many of them. It was bigger than their lives. Now in the New Testament time, in our time, we know what that is. And that is Christ Himself.

I am going to give brothers and sisters some examples. What is the testimony of Joshua? Joshua was the leader who saw thirty years of activities in Canaan. At the end he said, we did not win the victory; it was not because of us that we had this land now; it was the Lord Jehovah who had won the victory for us. It was the Lord who has given us the land. And then he came to be very personal. He said the Lord has led us so far; now if you wanted to go back to the land where your ancestors worshipped the idols, if you wanted to worship those idols you could go and do it. But as for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord. Brothers and sisters, there is something bigger than life. Not only have I been serving the Lord, I will continue to serve this Lord. And my sons and grandsons will continue and also serve this Lord. Now Ruth, the Moabite had never been in Israel before. But in her mother-in-law, she saw a God that was so great and so real. And she also saw the Lord's inheritance in His people. The Israelites at that time was not very pretty, spiritually. That was the time of the judges. But somehow Naomi gave Ruth an impression that there was an eternal inheritance that God has given to His people. So at the time when Naomi told Ruth to go back to the Moabites, Ruth said no. 'Your God was my God. Your people were my people. Wherever you were buried, I would be buried'. So there was a God that is great that Ruth wanted. There was an inheritance that was great that Ruth wanted. The burial place simply means an eternal inheritance, an eternal relationship. If you were to be buried in Israel; you would not going to be buried in Moab. So this was Ruth's testimony. This God is so good, this inheritance is so good. This eternal inheritance is so good that I was going to forget my past and would go to this new place. This was Ruth's testimony.



And then we go onto the testimony of Mary of Bethany. Just a few days earlier, her brother died. She and her sister went to ask the Lord to come. The Lord stayed two more days, then came and her brother has already died. Her sister and she were not happy. Lord if you came earlier my brother would not have died. But the Lord said, 'I am the resurrection, I am the life'. And then the Lord also said, 'did I not tell you if you believe you will see the glory of the Lord'? Now these things Mary heard. She put them in her heart and thought them over and over. The Lord Jesus got bigger and bigger in her heart. She used to know Him when he came to their house and stayed overnight. She used to sit at His feet and listened and she even knew He was going to go to the cross. But this time it was bigger than she knew. That is the One Who gives life. Jesus is the One Who opens our eyes to see the glory of the Lord. So a few days later, she came to this place with her jar of nard. She broke it and poured it on the Lord. She never said a word. The disciples on the side said what a waste. And the Lord said, 'do not make it difficult for this woman; wherever the gospel is preached, you have to tell the story'. That was the testimony of Mary. She did not have to say a word. The nard said it. The fragrance filled the house.

There was this brother by the name of Horace Pitkin. He was an American missionary to China in the year 1900. And he was martyred during the Boxer's revolt. Before he died, he asked his servant to bring a message to his wife. And it was about his son. He said, 'tell the mother of little Horace, to tell Horace that his father's last wish is when he reaches 25 years of age, he should come back to China as a missionary'. Brothers and sisters, it was so noble in what he was thinking. I dare not guess what he was thinking. But I think he was saying this, one of these days my son would die my death; but then he would be serving a great God and the glorious purpose is bigger than my life and his life. Brothers and sisters, this was his testimony. I believe many others who love the Lord see the purpose of the Lord bigger than themselves. Brothers and sisters, do we own this testimony, can we say that this testimony is mine? Not only ours, but mine; and that His glorious purpose is mine and it is bigger than my life.

The history of the remnant is a very sad history. But on the other hand it was also a glorious history that God is happy to tell. In the Old Testament time, the history of the remnant encompassed at least one-third of the Old Testament time. Isaiah, one of the prophets at that time saw the condition of God's people. In the first chapter, he said 'the ox knows their master and the donkey knows the master's crib. But my people do not know me'. But thank the Lord, as our brother said yesterday morning, in the sixth chapter, Isaiah went into the temple and saw God on the throne. His eye sight changed and from chapter 7 on. In chapter 7, his son appeared and his son had a name and his name was 'the remnant shall return'. So on one hand, the condition of Judah was really bad. But on the other hand, he saw the remnant in the future and the remnant should return and should return to the mighty God. Micah, the prophet during Isaiah's time foresaw the testimony of this remnant. And he said this remnant in the nation who had gone to many places; 'they are the dew of the Lord. It is the dew of Jehovah and they water the grass. And this

remnant in the nations, they are like lions in the forest. Nobody can subdue them'. This is the testimony of Micah for this remnant.

About a century later, Judah was taken and Jerusalem was sacked and people, like Daniel and others, whoever had read any books, were all taken to Babylon. That started a very sad and very shameful period for generations. Now Daniel in captivity lived a life that was separated to God. And he maintained the fellowship with God. Every day he opened his window and he prayed towards the direction of Jerusalem. And when he could get hold of the word of God, he would read the word of God. Almost seventy years later, one day when he was reading Jeremiah, he knew that God was going to bring them back in the seventieth year. He put on sack cloth. He went in to pray before the Lord. He said 'Lord, we and our fathers have sinned against you. Over the years you have sent prophets to warn us and you want us to return but we never return. So you scattered us in far, far places. Lord, you did this, you are right'. Brothers and sisters, this is deep repentance. Some time I think, if you are sad, if you think you are wrong, just repent to the Lord for yourself. Why do you bring in your parents? Why do you bring in your ancestors, your rulers and everything? Later I realized that no matter I offended You, Lord, no matter my generation offended You and no matter my parents, my previous generation offended You, it was You who were offended. So brothers and sisters, this was the heart of the remnant, no matter what we did it was You who have been hurt. And then Daniel said through all these Your love for us has never changed. And then he turned to the next subject about the future. In his prayer in 9:16, he said, 'by Your righteousness, Lord, I pray that You turn Your anger and Your fury from Your city Jerusalem: Your holy mountain, and then we, Your people have caused You shame, but we are still Your people'. Brothers and sisters, what was he talking about. He was talking about the righteousness of God. He was saying, 'this city is Yours, this mountain is Yours, and these people are Yours. It is Your rights to make it good again, to be good like what You originally want'.

Now brothers and sisters, I am sure if Daniel had read Jeremiah I am sure he had also read Isaiah because Isaiah is so much earlier than Jeremiah. So when Daniel told the Lord 'it is Your city, it is Your people', there is something deeper there. What is His city? What is God's expectation for His city? Now Isaiah in Isaiah 60: 14 said, 'those people who have despised Your city, one day they will come back and they will bend their knees to Your city; because You are the Lord, the city is the city of the Lord'. Then he said in verse 15, 'Jerusalem, although people despised it, although no one wants to go in and out, but Lord Jehovah said, I will make you an eternal excellence and joy from generation to generation'. Brothers and sisters, at that time there was no temple and the city was almost in ruins. Jerusalem was in ruin. People despised it and there was good reason to despise it. But the Lord said, 'I will make it an eternal excellence'.

Brothers and sisters do we, together look anything like eternal excellence? But the Lord said He will make it eternal excellence. Whether there are 30 people or 100 people, no matter how many people at where we meet, we see so many problems. When we look at it from the eyes of the Lord, it is such a shamble. But the Lord said I will make it an eternal excellence. Brothers and sisters, may these words fire us. That is what He wants.

Now brothers and sisters, Isaiah was not saying these things in vacuum. Yesterday our brother has already said that in earlier chapters, Isaiah saw a virgin who would give birth to a child and His name should be called Immanuel. And there a great light would shine and He was actually a son. A son was given, a son was born. On His shoulder is the government and His name is wonderful, counselor, almighty God, father eternal and prince of peace. Brothers and sisters, Isaiah saw these things and he also saw that the servant of God would come. In Isaiah 42, 'the Spirit of the Lord will fill Him and a bruised reed He will not break and the flickering wick He will not extinguish'. And He would proclaim the truth to the nations. And the islands would listen to His words. Brothers and sisters, a son would be born, a light would come. This servant would come.

Brothers and sisters, this is the substance of the Lord's proclamation. I will make Jerusalem the eternal excellence. I will make my church the eternal excellence. Now in Christ, it is already true. Today when we gather we do not like what we see when we look at ourselves. But we also see Christ in the midst of us. He is the eternal excellence. And then when we see Him, we have hope. Isaiah also said His joy would be from generation to generation. Brothers and sisters, we have kids. Today we have hundreds of kids out there in the class. Can you believe it? Today the joy fills our heart. You know the joy of the Lord will fill their hearts as well; and not only these kids but also their kids. This is the Lord's promise. And He will bring it to pass. If we open our eyes we will see that. This was what Isaiah said and this had to be what moved Daniel's heart. Now this was about Jerusalem.

What about Your people? In Isaiah chapter 43, the Lord said 'these people I have created for My glory; you are created for My glory'. A few verses down, He said, 'you are created to proclaim My praise'. Brothers and sisters, we do not see that in us. We do not see any glory in us that we can talk about. But the Lord said we are created for His glory. So no matter what I was yesterday, but from today on, no matter how young you are, no matter how many bad things you have done, you and I are created for His glory. So Daniel told the Lord, 'Lord, turn Your anger from Jerusalem, turn Your anger from Your people. Bring us back. Let Your light shine again in Your sanctuary. Give us another chance to live for Your glory'. This was his prayer. Brothers and sisters, this was the spirit of the remnant.

Later on during the second time the Israelites went back, Ezra also had a prayer which is in chapter 9. When you read his prayer, you detect the same spirit. 'Lord we have sinned against You. Our sins are higher than our head. But today You still bring us back. You fixed us in Your house and we are as a nail

in Your house. This was Ezra's prayer. And when you come to Nehemiah's time, Nehemiah also had a prayer. It was in the same spirit. 'Lord, You said before; if we are bad, You are going to scatter us around, but if we are good and we turn around our hearts to You, You are going to bring us back to Your place'. This was Nehemiah's prayer. Brothers and sisters, this was the spirit of the remnant. The wall was built in fifty-two days. It has been in desolation for one hundred and fifty years. After they built the wall, one strange thing happened. People gathered at the water gate of the temple. They demanded that the word of God to be read to them. In the past, it was the rulers who asked the people to listen to the word of God. This time it was the people who wanted to hear the word of God. And not only that, they said they wanted to understand the word of God. So the Levites explained these words to them. Now they understood. They wept. The bible did not tell us why they wept. But Nehemiah told them 'today is a holy day; you are not supposed to cry'. And then Nehemiah told them 'the joy of the Lord is your strength'. Yes, 'the joy of the Lord'. In the Chinese bible, it is translated as if the joy is ours. But in the original language the joy is His. And in all the English translation, it is like the original. And it is a direct thing. Of course because of His joy, we have our joy. But the first thing is that it is His joy. Why was He joyful? Now the people wept because then they understood. In the past, they might have misunderstood the Lord. They might have thought 'Lord our fathers have sinned against thee but that was several generations ago. How is it that we have been miserable for so many years like this'. Now they heard the word of God; now they understood the word of God, I think. What has got into the heart of Daniel was what has got into the heart of Ezra and it was what has got into the heart of Nehemiah. Now it has got into them as well. Now they knew, 'Lord we have offended you, not only our parents, not only our forefathers but we also have offended you O, Lord. In the past, you punished us, you were right. Your love has never left us. In all our sufferings, you have suffered with us. This time you brought us back; you have your glorious purpose. Thank the Lord; these people's hearts were one with another; one with Daniel, one with Ezra and one with Nehemiah. I think the Lord's heart was happy. It has never been like this before. Now my people finally understood after so many generations. In Nehemiah following chapter 8, they came together to celebrate the feast of booth and the bible said, there was the joy in that feast at that time. There was never anything like that feast of the booth since the time of Joshua. Joshua was one thousand years ago. You would think every year for one thousand years they were supposed to have this feast of the booth. But it was never like this; they never had this joy. And it was the joy that was from the joy of the Lord. Brothers and sisters, what was going on? The Lord was pointing to His people, and telling His enemy 'this is my victory! These are my victories'. So brothers and sisters, it was a glorious history, not of the city, not even of the temple but of the heart and the spirit of these people. The Lord had His victory already.

Now we go quickly to 500 years later. The Lord already came. The Lord already ascended to heaven. The Book of Acts already told us of all the stories of these apostles and the glorious history of this people. Also sadly from the 60s to the 90s or even prior to that, the condition of the church has really decayed. Now in the 90s, at the island of Patmos, the Lord appeared to John and showed him the condition of the seven churches in Asia minor. The Lord is in heaven but he is watching his church all the time, administering to his church all the time. But the general condition of the church was sad.

But when you read these seven letters to the churches, in the letter to Philadelphia, you can read joy in the Lord's heart. So what is the testimony of the Philadelphia church? The Lord said, 'I make them of the synagogue of satan and I will cause them to come back and bow down to you'. And the Lord also said, 'I am the one who has the key of David, when I open, it cannot be shut and when I shut it cannot be opened. Now I have given you an open door'. Brothers and sisters, the Philadelphian brothers had a testimony of Jesus. They did not say anything. The Lord said these things for them. When we see what the Lord said they did, 'you have just a little power and you have kept my word, you have not denied my name', it appeared it did not say anything special because in the letters to other churches, similar words appeared. But then there was one thing that the Lord said which was very special. The Lord said, 'you have kept the word of My endurance'. This was the word about His endurance or His patience. What does that mean? What is the Lord's patience? What is the Lord's endurance? One thing of course we know that he endured the cross. This is in Hebrew's chapter 12. He endured the cross. But there is one thing more. He suffered for the church. He loved the church and gave Himself for it. And He even suffered for the church. Paul observed one thing and it is in Colossians chapter 1. Paul saw that the Lord has suffered for the church. And Paul thought the church should also suffer together with Him for the body. But he felt that the church was not doing that. So he said 'I am filling in my body the suffering of Jesus Christ'. Yes the lacking is the lacking of the church. What the Lord Jesus did was that he suffered for the church. The church lacked that. And Paul said I want to fill in my body that lacking. So here we see the Lord suffered for the church. This is also His endurance.

Brothers and sisters, when I looked at this, I feel this second thing, suffering for the church, is even a bigger thing than the way of the cross. I should say in our own experience, oftentimes we walk the way of the cross because we want to be spiritual. Many saints in the past, they hid themselves somewhere and they walked the way of the cross to make themselves spiritual. But here is the suffering, the suffering is for His church; the suffering is for His purpose; the suffering is for the father's purpose. It was not my will but Thy will be done. Brothers and sisters, those brothers in Philadelphia seemed to have walked in the way with the Lord for that. It was not my will but Thy will be done. They suffered for the church; they suffered for His purpose. This is something very, very special.

So the Lord said I have given you an open door. About sixty years ago, the Lord said, 'I will build my church upon this rock and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. And I will give you the key to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you set free on earth will be set free in heaven'. That is the Lord's original thought for His church. And what does the Lord mean? The Lord means that in the people in His church and He Himself, there is a oneness in the burden, one mind, one heart and one burden. The New American Standard bible translates this differently. 'Whatever you bind on earth would have been bound in heaven'. Yes, already bound. 'Whatever you set free on earth would have been set free in heaven'. Brothers and sisters, you cannot tell who the first is and who the second is. Brothers and sisters, it is the same time. The church ought to have the burden of the Lord. The church ought to know what the Lord is thinking. The church ought to know where the Lord wants to lead us. And then when we come together to pray, what you pray is the same as what is in the heart of the Lord. Now it seems the Lord has found that in the church of Philadelphia. So He said I give you an open door and no one can shut it. Brothers and sisters, we ought to go back to the original thought of the Lord for His church.

Now He also said 'I will cause the synagogue of satan to come and bow down to you'. Sometimes we dare not say anything about that. But there is a history in that. Remember the verse that we read in Isaiah 6:14? The Lord wants his enemies to come to Jerusalem to bow down to it because this is the city of the Lord. Now here the Lord saw in the church of Philadelphia that they had a little power. They walked the way of sufferings with the Lord. They had one mind one heart with the Lord. Now the Lord told His enemies 'you have to come and bow down to them'. In another word, the Lord was pointing to the Philadelphian brothers and telling His enemies: this is My victory; they are my victories. Brothers and sisters, we say today we cannot be Philadelphia. It is like a dream. It is like an ideal. If we think this way, we are defeated even before we start. So may the Lord give us strength inside. By His grace, by His opening our eyes, by our willingness to actually overcome with Him, we give the testimony of Philadelphia a chance in our midst. If you have only thirty people together, it is just fine because Philadelphia only had small power. Wherever we are, give the Lord a chance. Let the testimony of Philadelphia be our testimony as well. Let us be willing to walk with the Lord in the way for the suffering of His purpose and of His church. Regardless of our past failures, regardless of our weakness today, give the purpose of God a chance in our midst. Let the Lord purify ourselves so that we can have open fellowship with the Lord, so that we can know his mind and his heart and we consider this to be supreme in our heart. And then give the Lord a chance to tell his enemy: this people are my victory.

Let us pray.

Lord, we felt that we have hurt You for a long time. We have disappointed You for a long time. The enemy almost got us. They almost have succeeded in getting us. But Lord, You are bigger than he. We pray that You inspire our heart to see what is in your heart. Make that supreme in our heart. Lord, as You said 'the heaven is My seat, the earth is My footstool, where can I find My house, where I can find a place to rest'. You look for those who have a humble and contrite heart. We tremble at Your word. Our Lord Jesus, when You came down to the earth, the fox have holes, the birds of the air have nest but You have nowhere to lay Your head. Lord, encourage us so we are willing to be a place where You can lay Your head; we can be a place where You can find rest. Lord may Your heart be satisfied. Bless Your people. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.