

Overcomers

John Lee

2020 is shaping up to be unlike any year we have experienced. The Covid virus and social unrest have brought a sense of unease and instability. As we now enter the period of national elections with their kept and unkept promises, we have the ingredients that easily lead us to feelings of uncertainty and instability. The virus leaves us with the uncertainty of life. Social unrest leaves us with the uncertainty of history and the future. And elections leave us with the uncertainty of promises likely to be broken. In the Lord's last written words, eight times in **Revelation**, the early church was called to overcome or to be "overcomers" (see **2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21** and **21:7**). This is a time when God calls His people to be "OVERCOMERS."

Often throughout history, God's people are called to overcome, and the current times seem to strongly call us to that. It is easy to miss how closely the reality of biblical lives parallels what can occur in ours and, in so doing, we diminish the modern contained in the journeys of the old saints. We fail to see that, in the midst of their distresses, they exhibited some of their greatest worship.

In **1 Corinthians 14:33**, we are told that God is not the author of confusion. What a beautiful thought! In the midst of a world of confusion and instability there can be assurance and peace. God is the Rock/our Rock. He is the epitome of stability and the antithesis of confusion. God is the key to our enduring. He has given us three great institutions: the family, civil government and the church. All three are to be sources of peace and stability. And when they are not, man struggles. Stability is God's turf. But we are in a society of instability and confusion. And as such we are on Satan's turf, but we need not be without God.

When a nation rejects absolute truth, moral standards and biblical values, then everything is grey and there is no certainty. We live in a world that claims to be so enlightened while at the same time it tears down foundational values. In claiming freedom, it rejects family roles, integrity, personal responsibilities and modesty, then wonders why chaos rules.

Imagine your life if you knew the future. Would it change you? You would think it would, but the children of Israel were told repeatedly by the prophets what the future held. They often ignored it and went on unchanged. As **James 4:14** tells, we don't know what will be on the morrow. But in these closed and cancelled times of uncertainty one truth remains unchanged: JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. THE RETURN OF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN CANCELLED. ETERNAL PEACE AND CERTAINTY ARE COMING.

This is a time when, being an overcomer is so crucial, a time when we can and should let our lights shine by overcoming the depression, anger, uncertainty and worry gripping the world. In **Revelation 12:11**, we are told: "*they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of testimony and not loving their lives unto death.*" Three key steps to overcoming: 1) accepting the blood of Christ, 2) believing and sharing His word and 3) trusting Him so as not to fear death.

Overcomers realize that life is fragile; drawing near to God is critical and showing joy even in difficult times is a light shining opportunity. If our joy is true joy, it will be congruous with pain and suffering. The test of godly joy is whether it is compatible with times such as these. Overcomers know with assurance who holds the future.

But what about the future challenges these days do and will bring to Christians and the church? Most of us have not been able to assemble as we have been accustomed to during the years. Some services have been cancelled, others shortened. Hopefully this lessening of our fellowship and time together will instill in each of us a greater desire and appreciation of our assemblies as we are able to reconvene. But could

our flesh start leading us into thoughts such as: “Even though we’ve been meeting less I still feel close or closer to God than before.” “It sure was nice not to have to go to church so often or to have shortened services.” Will our devotion to assembling together decline because of a false sense that we did fine without it? We must remember and remind ourselves how important our assembling together is.

God instituted our assembling together not only to praise and glorify Him (which it should), but because He knew that was what we need. The encouragement and edification can only come in its fullness when the church is assembled together. We must be diligent to not lessen our assembling together when the pandemic eases but to appreciate and cherish our time together even more.

We also must remember that God divinely instituted the Lord’s Supper as an individual responsibility (“*let a man examine himself;*” **1 Corinthians 11:28**) but to be done in the aggregate, as an assembled congregation. In **1 Corinthians 11**, Paul repeatedly says “*as the church...in one place*” when referring to the communion. Emphasizing that it is not only a grand time of communion with the Lord but also a grand time of communion with, and as, our church congregation.

Also, as we examine ourselves, maybe we find something in each of our lives we need, and have intended to, correct or improve on. But in spite of our intentions, we just haven’t gotten to it yet. Maybe these slowed-down times are an opportunity to reboot and hit the reset button. I know little about the inner workings of computers, iPads or cell phones, though I use them all. But I have learned one of the best and simplest ways to get them working correctly when they malfunction is to turn them off, then back on. We call that resetting or rebooting. Could that be something for us to consider: rebooting some portion of our life during this slowdown? Making changes in our lives that will improve our service.

Has God brought these times to teach us and cause us to reflect? Possibly, but God does not cause everything that happens. Because He is sovereign, nothing happens that He doesn’t allow. We cannot change the last few months, but we can learn from them and prepare for the upcoming challenges resulting from them. We can become even stronger OVERCOMERS.