

THE ADVERSITY GOSPEL #1 - OVERCOMING

Sermon by Todd Lester

February 5, 2017

Romans 8:37 (NIV) ... we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

2 Corinthians 1:7 (NIV) And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

Life doesn't make sense, but we can have _____ because we know God is with us and _____

Isaiah 43:2, Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 49:15-16

Stages of grief for believers:

1. S _____ - don't deny e _____
2. S _____ - it's okay to ask _____
3. S _____ - a _____ is the p _____ to p _____
4. S _____ = g _____ (turns mess into _____, test into _____)

Everything on earth is broken, but we can have _____ because we know God is good and He's got a _____

Isaiah 24:5,19, Romans 8:28

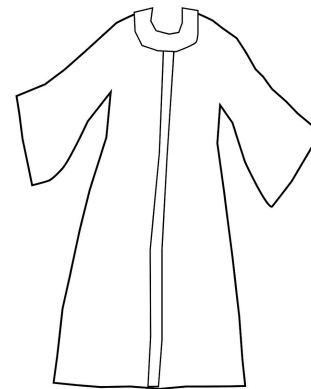
Romans 8:28 is often misunderstood, but it doesn't say that everything that happens is g _____ or G _____

Life is a battle, but we can have _____ because we know that there is more to _____

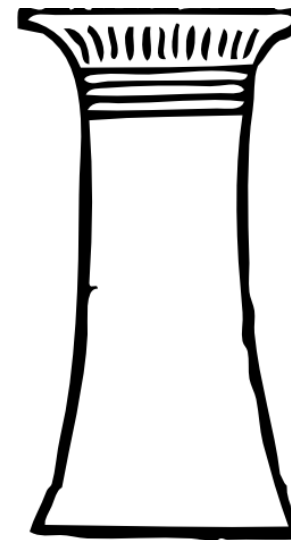
2 Corinthians 4:18, Revelation 21:4

OVERCOMERS

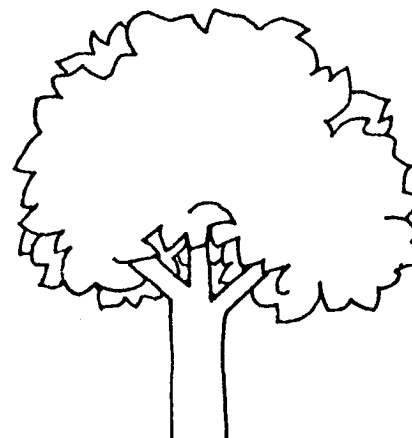
In the book of Revelation we see several (metaphorical?) rewards that will be given to those who overcome through Christ. Consider some of the things you have had to overcome in your life and write them on the illustrations below. Think about ways that God was present to help you in these situations.



... will be clothed in
white garments
Rev. 3:5



... will be a pillar in
my temple
Rev. 3:12



...will eat of the tree
of life
Rev. 3:7



...will be given a white
stone
Rev. 2:17

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Life doesn't make sense, but we can have peace because we know God is with us and He loves us

Isaiah 43:2 When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

Hebrews 13:5 ... God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Isaiah 49:15-16 Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

Stages of grief for believers:

1. Sorrow - don't deny emotion
2. Struggle - it's okay to ask why
3. Surrender - acceptance is the path to peace
4. Sanctification = growth (turns mess into message test into testimony)

Everything on earth is broken, but we can have joy because we know God is good and He's got a greater plan

Isaiah 24:5,19 The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted God's instructions, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant. The earth has broken up. It has utterly collapsed; it is violently shaken.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Romans 8:28 is often misunderstood, but it doesn't say that everything that happens is good or God's will

Life is a battle, but we can have hope because we know that there is more to the story

2 Corinthians 4:18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Revelation 21:4 God will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'Overcomers' activity is meant to help get participants things or situations in their lives when they have had to overcome something. What losses or challenges have they experienced in life? And how was God a part of their ability to 'get through what they were going through'? Give time for reflection and then ask people to share some of their responses.

Todd said that this new series, The Adversity Gospel, is a response to the prevalent Prosperity Gospel found in some churches. Where have you run across the prosperity gospel (which says that if you have enough faith then you should be healthy and wealthy)? Do you feel that it has influenced you in any way? Do we still have a tendency to think that if we believe in God we shouldn't have any problems?

Read and discuss Romans 8:35-39. What do you think it means to be 'more than conquerors' (NIV) or to have 'overwhelming victory' (NLT)?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:7 (NIV). Todd emphasized that it's what you know that can get you through tough times. Would you agree with this or is does it have to do with more than just what you know?

Todd pointed out that we won't be able to stand spiritually strong when faced with the inevitable tragedies in life unless we know the right truths. What would you count as some of the most important 'right truths'?

Life doesn't make sense, but we can have peace because we know God is with us and He loves us

Focuses on Isaiah 43:2, Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 49:15-16

Todd said that life is confusing and that there are a lot more questions than answers. Do you find this kind of outlook accurate, challenging or refreshing (compared, say, to those Christians who too easily say things like 'Jesus is the answer')?

Fill in the blanks and discuss the stages of grief that Todd suggested (see below). Do these make sense to you? Do they reflect what you've gone through when you've experienced loss? Have you seen God use your difficult experience to help you grow or to help others?

Stages of grief for believers:

1. Sorrow - don't deny emotion
2. Struggle - it's okay to ask why
3. Surrender - acceptance is the path to peace
4. Sanctification = growth (turns mess into message, test into testimony)

Todd said that when we are in pain, explanations don't really help, that we need the presence of God. How can knowing God is with us and loves us help us through a painful situation?

Everything on earth is broken, but we can have joy because we know God is good and He's got a greater plan

Focuses on Isaiah 24:5,19, Romans 8:28

Recall some of the things that Todd mentioned don't work perfectly because of sin (weather, body, economy, relationships, brain). What would you add to this list?

How do we know that God is good? What is His 'greater plan'?

What do you think is a helpful perspective about life: everything is broken or we can have joy in the Lord, or a balance between both?

Todd mentioned that sometimes at funerals well-meaning people will say nonsensical things like the death must have been God's will. Why do you think this gets said? Why is it not helpful?

Romans 8:28 is often misunderstood, but it doesn't say that everything that happens is good or God's will

Life is a battle, but we can have hope because we know that there is more to the story

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:18, Revelation 21:4

Do you agree with Todd's statement that you will live with pain for the rest of your life?

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Is your spirit being renewed every day? How?

Discuss Todd's statement that the greatest problem in the world is not poverty but is hopelessness.

How can we keep a positive attitude if life is seen as a battle? What are some alternative ways to look at life? (as an adventure, as a gift, as a journey, ...)

Do you see hope as a result of some distant promise of heaven (as we read in Revelation 21) or because of the promises of God for today?