

9,24,26 2 Tim. 1:8-18

God's Purpose for His People and the Means of its Achievement

Let's begin by reading through the final section of 2 Tim. 1 (vs's 8 to 18);

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason, I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.

It is not surprising that after Paul puts an emphasis on those things which are most important to him, he begins to disclose the personal suffering that resulted from his faithfulness.

If you and I are faithful to pursue God's purpose for us in Christ and we genuinely desire the glory of Christ to be manifest to all creation, the push-back will be intense.

Paul felt the need to make sure Timothy had some practical instructions so he would be able to deal effectively with the daily situations and problems of life in a close-knit assembly (all churches were in homes in those days). We have spent a great deal of time on the atmosphere of a local church. As important as this is, especially for those Paul was writing to (men in church leadership positions), if we don't keep the heavenly perspective, we'll miss the forest for the trees. In other words, there's nothing practical we can learn which can truly help and guide us if we can't continue to see all these things in the context of the much larger picture.

This is a huge part of the problem with contemporary Christianity – they are striving to be practical and obedient to the do's and don'ts in the Bible, but when those are taken out of the context of God's overall purpose for why these kinds of instructions even exist in the first place, they simply become a blueprint for Christian living rather than a response to an amazing and all-encompassing purpose that raises us above, and catches us into the heavenlies allowing us to act on earth as those who's citizenship is in heaven and whose destiny is eternal glory, not earthly glory.

So, I want to spend a few minutes attempting to refresh our memory on what the Lord has been working toward throughout history.

From before the creation of Man, there was a challenge made to God's sovereign right to rule His creation. Another will, besides God's will, entered in. Lucifer proclaimed that he is the one who should reign;

(Isa. 14:13-14) You have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like (or we could say, "in the position of") the Most High.

But God rejected that and pronounced judgement on him (Ezek. 28). God had determined that His Son would hold that position and that Christ would share His throne with the overcomers of a race of beings called "Man";

(Rev. 3:21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

So, the war began. Who will be the sovereign over creation and why does Satan even think he has a chance at winning this war? And why does humanity appear to be at the center of all of it?

Satan's primary tool has always been deception, so he deceived Adam and Eve and became "the god of this world", "the prince of the power of the air". As we saw in 1 Cor. 15, God's Son became the "Second Man", the "Last Adam" in order to recover what the first Adam had lost. And now, out of all nations, a people are being called and joined to Christ in order to have the honor of sharing the Lord's victory over the enemy. Those within that vast company of people who believe in Christ and who then go on to commit themselves to the purpose God has determined for us, will be those who share the throne of the Son of God.

Satan's goal at present is to hide this calling, and the means of its achievement, from the Church hoping to prevent Christians from moving to spiritual adulthood which would allow us to attain or apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended us;

(Phil. 3:12-15) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind.

Paul wasn't "pressing toward being saved" he was pressing toward God's goal for all of us. The "upward call" is the recovery and realization of God's original thought for us; to share with Christ in the governance of creation.

Thanks to the enemy's efforts of deception and limitation, most Christians are not aware of this, let alone committed to it. It's difficult to commit to something you know little or nothing about, as to its purpose or the means of achieving it. Satan

has worked with all of his might and genius to remove, from God's people, an understanding of the Lord's purpose for us and he has also worked to remove a wartime mentality from us; the battle we are engaged in with the principalities and powers that are co-laboring with Lucifer to conceal the "what" and "how" of this purpose by blinding us to its reality and by restricting us to a level of spiritual infancy preventing us from being a part of the overcoming remnant of the Church Age.

I came across this next explanation online, but they didn't cite the author;

We have made reference to the thought of a remnant (he's speaking about the history of Israel and specifically the faithful in Israel). The community as a whole could be narrowed down to a part which could represent the whole and continue its inheritance. This idea of a remnant is found throughout the whole Bible, it is not confined to the prophets, though they say much about it. In the story of the flood, Noah and his family constitute a remnant in whom the Divine purpose is concentrated and preserved. The blessing promised to Abraham and his seed was limited to one of his sons, Isaac. In the time of Elijah, we read of a righteous remnant of seven thousand which had not bowed the knee to Baal. This idea is found in Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, in Amos, in Micah. The remnant represents in a minority God's ultimate desire for all His people. If you carry this over, you will see that it is gathered into the overcomers at the end. What a tremendous thing is bound up with them: no less an issue than God's eternal intention concerning His Son, concerning the Church, in the government of this universe.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to over 500 people, and He ate and fellowshiped with His disciples. But after He ascended, and his resurrection body was exchanged for what Paul called "his glorified body" (Phil. 3:21), His appearance both amazed and terrified all who saw it. The disciples got a glimpse of this on the Mount of Transfiguration where Peter became confused and started rambling something about tents until God cut him off; Paul was blinded by His appearance

on the road to Damascus and when John saw our glorified Lord in full glory, he fell at His feet “as dead” (Rev. 1:17).

In the coming Millennial Kingdom of Christ, there will be several classes or types of people on earth; the first are the believing Jews and Gentiles who survive the Tribulation; next the resurrected Old Testament saints (Abraham, Jacob, David, etc.) and finally the members of the Body of Christ who will have returned with the Lord at His coming. The first group will have bodies like all humans have now – they will have lived through the Tribulation and entered the Kingdom just as they are. Which means that the millions of people in this group will still have sin natures (the flesh) so, a propensity for sin will still be active in the Millennium culminating in a global rebellion against Christ at the end (which we saw detailed in Rev. 20:7-10. Those within Christ’s body who reign with Him will be His instrument to execute swift and severe justice throughout the earth.

(Rev. 2:26-27) He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations— ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’.

The second group, the Old Testament believers, will have bodies similar to Adam before the fall; bodies without disease, immortal and with abilities released through the power of resurrection. Christians will have bodies fashioned according to the glorified body of Christ following His ascension. We will be primarily spirit beings as members of a completely new type of creation, a new kind of humanity (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 3:1-2) and our presence will astonish those who see us.

(2 Cor. 5:17) If anyone is in Christ, he is a completely new creation

(1 Jn. 3:2) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We will be a cause of joy and relief to the inhabitants of earth because through us God will restore and heal creation from the curse of the fall.

(Rom. 8:19-22) The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not

willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

The whole earth will be like Eden, completely healthy and incredibly beautiful – the curse will have been removed.

Those of us who are the overcoming remnant within the Body of Christ will terrify those we judge when we return with the Lord, of both men and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Each individual member of the Church will radiate with a different measure or degree of light and power based on how we've lived our lives here (1 Cor. 15:41-42a).

So, the Millennial Kingdom will be inhabited by a very unique mixture of humans. With Christ as King of Kings, the remnant of the Old Testament believers and the martyred believers of the Tribulation will be in the place of governance over Christ's kingdom. The overcomers of the Church Age will be in sovereign rule over all creation.

This is the underlying theme and ultimate goal of the entire Bible. It is the revealing of the position God's Son will have in the universe; the purpose of creation itself, and the book of Revelation in particular is the full and final disclosure of God's plan to resolve the conflict that has been raging in the heavenlies for thousands of years.

Like we saw in Phil. 3, Paul said "Let all who are mature have this mind – this goal". That's why the final book of the Bible is called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". It reveals Him in His full and final position with His faithful followers by His side having won the war and assumed His rightful place as both Creator and Sovereign of that which is His.

Revelation is far more than simply a book about prophetic events to come, to be taken up by end-time podcasters for discussion, theorizing and debate.

So, we're shown the nature of the cosmic conflict (the "Seed War" between Christ and Satan), we're shown the victory that was accomplished at the Cross and

resurrection, and we're shown the sharing of Christ's Throne by the overcomers who suffered with Him in this Age in order to reign with Him in the eternal Ages to come. (2 Tim 2:12) "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him" (and note; the word "if" in this verse is in what's called the 3<sup>rd</sup>. class condition, meaning that if we overcome through sharing His sufferings, we will share His reign; if we don't we won't.

The sacrifice of the Cross took our Lord to the highest place of glory and sovereignty possible. Our personal cross, assuming we understand the meaning and necessity of embracing it, will determine our role in the coming eternal Kingdom of our Lord.

All true servants of God, if they are to be faithful to their calling, have to be fully acquainted with the purpose of God in Christ and of their role and responsibility in the outworking of that purpose in their generation. We can't commit to something we don't know about or understand, and we can't know about this if contemporary church leadership isn't teaching it.

Now, let's move down to the issues we face personally in daily life that define what we must go through to be who we are called to be.

For example, when we ask for strength or help, the Lord doesn't give us strength from outside, injecting it into us with a magical syringe, he puts us in situations that develop inward character- like endurance and experience and patience, etc., which then become part of who we are as that which is aligned with the nature we received at our new birth. This is why Paul talks so much about our being conformed inwardly into the image of Christ. For those committed to His purpose, He's shaping us into princes of the heavenly realms.

It's the same with discernment and obedience, the mature believer doesn't obey simply because there's a passage someplace in the Bible that tells him what to do under certain circumstances. Ideally, he has studied (and continues to study) so his mind is saturated with God's thoughts, which the Spirit can draw from, and remind us of, when they are needed. The believer who abides in Christ and in whom Christ's word abides obeys spontaneously because he instinctively knows, through

growth and development, and by having an “ear to hear what the Spirit says” what should be done. His response is spontaneous, natural, and organic flowing from the new life growing within him because he’s teachable and dependent on the Lord.

And with spiritual discernment, he doesn’t need a chart or a diagram. Paul says we have the mind of Christ and as we begin to see everything around us through His eyes, we simply see through the surface to the reality. We see it and we know it because of spiritual growth. If we’ve filled our minds over the years with the passages, doctrines, and theology of God’s Word, and these things we’ve learned have been engrafted into our hearts through faith, we are seeing what Christ sees.

The Lord is against imitation; He knows that is hypocrisy, he knows that the only thing which has value is that which comes from a true nature, not those things which are done because of words written on tablets of stone, but because of the truth written on our hearts.

All of us start out as children imitating what we see in our parents. It’s one of the ways that we learn what’s acceptable and what’s not acceptable. But eventually, the child has to become an adult and that person’s decisions have to become an expression of who *they* are, not simply an imitation of what they’ve seen others do.

Since we are living in a generation of spiritual immaturity, most of what is happening is being done by spiritual children doing the best they can to imitate what they are told they should be doing. If they grew to spiritual adulthood, their actions would be coming from who they are becoming in Christ rather than simply coming from their best effort to copy what they believe they should be doing.

Through all of our prayer, study, circumstances and suffering, God is working the character of Christ into us. If we lack an understanding of the ways of God and of the final destiny and outcome of all that He is doing with us to complete his eternal purpose of conforming a race of people to the image of His Son, then not only will we not understand most of what’s happening in our lives (which can be both confusing and scary) we also won’t commit to the prayer and study needed to have

God's purpose accomplished. Instead, we will settle into a Christianity that never takes us beyond spiritual immaturity tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

The suffering that the Lord takes us through is designed to break the grip of the flesh, of religion, and of imitation, to make way for the true inward nature of the new creation we are in Christ to be formed and expressed through us because it will be *that* church- *those* Christians- whom God will be able to entrust with the governance of the Universe, because of who they are in Christ- because of what they've become under His hand.

Now, those who believe that *all* Christians are overcomers; that *all* are "conquerors", would not understand what we've been talking about. So, to try and help explain this concept of overcomers, there are two types of "overcomers" in the New Testament.

One type is the position all Christians have because of union with Christ at salvation; 1 Jn. 2:4-5;

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Our position in Christ is that we have been pulled out of the world through His victory; John 16:33;

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

We no longer need to be slaves to the world, but (as we all know in experience) we can choose to re-enslave ourselves to the world, from time to time, if the enemy can successfully deceive us and tempt us back.

The second use of "overcomer" in the New Testament matches the characteristics of the "remnant" of the Old Testament. Though all in Israel were (quote) "baptized into Moses . . . ", meaning identified or positioned with him when they placed their faith in God as shown in 1 Cor. 10:1-2, only a small number of them (a remnant)

moved into God's full purpose for the nation of Israel by going into Canaan which was to be their possession (Heb. 3:16-19). That was when their position *and* their purpose was realized in living expression.

In Revelation chapters 2 & 3, the term "overcomer" is shown to be a spiritual status or attainment, like David's mighty men, for example. This status is not given to all believers at salvation; it's gained through growth and faithfulness. The Throne is the reward for faithfulness, not a universal gift at salvation; (2 Tim. 2:12) "*If we endure, we will reign*". A person does not have to "endure" the testings of this life to be saved; salvation is a gift of grace given to faith alone.

As T. Austin Sparks put it;

What the Lord wants is a heart-condition which has not departed from Him; not those who are caught up in a great movement, but those who have been true to Him in the tests of time. Those who in the midst of the spiritual declension of the church remained true to the Lord's purpose; not those who have to be motivated by outward demonstrations and signs, but those whose hearts are steadily and firmly set upon God's thoughts, His interests, and desire that the Lord may have what He is after. The overcomer embodies the original intention of God and is God's instrument of achieving His purpose. Everyone or everything else may have settled for less, but the overcomer cannot do this. Even if most of Christianity becomes something other than God's original intent, the overcomer will pursue the highest and fullest of all that God is after no matter what the personal cost.

So, just as there is no justification without the Lord's Cross, there is no glorification, no throne-life in the coming ages, apart from our cross embraced over the course of our lives here, because it's in battle and conquest that God shapes the character of those who will reign with Him. As we saw in a past study from Stombeck;

God's purpose in the lives of His children while here on earth is to create, develop, strengthen, and refine that complete dependence on Him which must be found in those who, throughout all eternity, are to be the very closest to Him and share His glory. That is why God places so great an

emphasis upon the trial of faith. He is preparing for Himself, within a new creation in Christ Jesus, those who will be in complete voluntary dependence upon Him and in living subjection to Him. All who in this age of grace (the dispensation of the Church) believe on the Son and are willing to share in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ shall receive the glory which was given to Christ by the Father.

Literally everything Christ is doing in our lives is designed to qualify His Eternal Companion for entering into full partnership with her Lord in the governance of the universe (Israel is to govern the earth, the Church is to govern all creation) . . . As the bride of the Eternal Son, she is to share with Him universal sovereignty. . . This is a completely new, unique, and exclusive order of beings who can rightly be called a new species. There is nothing like it in all the kingdoms of infinity. This is the order of beings which God envisioned when He spoke the worlds into being. This is the order of beings which Paul called, 'the New Man' (Eph 2:15) destined through partaking of the divine nature to be the aristocracy of the universe. Christ will administrate and govern His eternal kingdom through those within His body, the Church, who have moved from children in the faith to mature disciples; vessels fit for the Master's use.

Many who call themselves Christians say they are not concerned about the future state. What they are interested in is the present. But the Bible teaches that it is the future state that is of *greatest* importance. While there are glories of salvation to be enjoyed by the believer now, even while in the present body there is still the presence of sin, poverty, sickness, death and sorrow which will never be gotten away from during the present life. In fact, and this is of utmost importance, the earthly existence of the saved is but a period of preparation for an eternal state. Few there seem to be who realize the glories that await those who overcome and how exalted a position is to be held by them throughout an unending eternity. Finite mind cannot grasp the fullness of all this, but the Bible reveals enough to show that it shall be the greatest thing that has ever come to any of God's creatures.

The Church exists for only one purpose – to be the living representation and expression of Christ in His creation. Not an imitation of Christ – a living *expression* of Christ. This is the purpose of the Church Age from beginning to end. Whether to angels or humans, the Church is to be the visible embodiment of Christ for all to see and to learn more of Who God is and what His purpose is;

(Eph. 3:10-11) To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known *by* the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the seven churches in Rev. chapters 2 & 3, we are shown what exists at present, and what God desires, and we are shown what is truly conformed to Christ and what must be put away as that which limits or sabotages that conformity. Everything that has been taught in the epistles about God's purpose for his people in this Age is summarized and broken down one final time in those seven letters. Those letters are much more important than most realize.

When we studied the Corinthian letters, we saw that it is in seeing Christ in increasing fullness and clarity over the decades of our lives that we are conformed to His image. Seeing Christ sets before our spiritual eyes God's ultimate goal for each of us, as well as exposing those things within us the Lord intends to remove.

So, our personal study of the scriptures must always be founded on our prayer that every part of the *written* word will be used by the Holy Spirit to reveal to us more and more of the full reality of the *living* word. If, to us, the Bible is just doctrine alone, then our lives will be merely an intellectual apprehension of the scriptures, but if the Bible is seen by us to be the means by which we are brought into a deeper revelation of Christ himself, our lives will move past intellectual apprehension to living participation in the character of the One we are seeing. Listen to these comments by Sparks based on Eph. 1:18;

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you.

It is a seeing of the immense significance of Jesus in the eternal and universal order. With the Apostles that seeing was subsequent to the days of physical association. During the forty days after His resurrection, it was like the dawning of a new day. First, those intimations, as when the uncertain light just passes over the heavens. Then more steady and certain rays, leading to the Day of Pentecost, when the sun appeared in full glory over the horizon dispelling the last shadow of uncertainty. On that day they saw Him as by an opened heaven. The mystery of the past was dispelled. The Bible lay open like a new book. They saw Him in the light of eternity. They began to see that, while He was the glorified, personal, Son of God, He was Himself the embodiment of a great, a vast heavenly and spiritual order and system. This seeing was absolutely revolutionary. It was a crisis out of which a new world and a new creation was born. True to this fundamental principle, all that vast revelation, which has come down the centuries from and through the Apostle Paul took its rise from that crisis described by him as "It pleased God... to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:16). "I received it... by revelation of Jesus Christ" (vs. 12). All the implications were in the crisis; the full content was a progressive and ever-growing revelation.

And never forget that all of this is with the Throne in view. Our privilege of co-reigning with Christ has been God's plan for the members of the church age as predetermined before the foundation of the world. This is His purpose, His goal, and literally everything He has been doing has been sovereignly leading to this ultimate fulfillment of providing His Son with a corporate co-regent, His beloved companion, the Pearl of great price, for whom He sacrificed His life to obtain in order to share with her His power and His reign forever.

If the ultimate purpose of God in establishing this new creation called the Church as His instrument of governing His creation is what we have *also* committed *our* life to, then God will take us there as we walk with him, but if we settle for something less or something different, then God will honor that decision and when we stand before him to give account of this life, we will become aware of what could have been and of what has been missed because we were not willing to seek after the Lord and understand *His* purpose.

Unfortunately, the details of the eternal purpose of God for the Church is one of the most “untaught” truths in the pulpits of our nation. I’m not saying that ignorance is an excuse, but it *is* an explanation of why the 21<sup>st</sup>. century’s version of Christianity (at least in Western culture) is so much less than what we see in scripture. As Hos. 4:6 warned us; “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

The one thing that describes and explains the ultimate goal God has had for this universe from the beginning is the issue of governance. Who will reign? Who will sit on the throne of heaven to rule all of creation for the infinite ages to come? Everything in the Bible, and especially in the final unveiling of Gods purpose in the book of Revelation, is God’s revealing of His eternal plan and of humanity’s intended role in that plan.

Think of all we’ve looked at tonight – is that the Christianity you are seeing and learning about on Sunday morning? We’ve been looking at the revelation given to Paul and the other apostles by the Holy Spirit so they could pass on to us what this is all about. Do you think most Christians in our time are really learning these things – are they learning where this all going and why, and what our part is in the full development of God’s purpose for us?

I haven’t heard it anywhere except from pastors and authors who have been absent from the body and present with the Lord since the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. So, what does that tell us?

It either means that what I’m teaching is imbalanced and completely off target from what I should be focused on, or it means that we really are in the apostasy Paul spoke of, and the Church has been deceived and dragged away from the truths that are the most important truths we need to know to step intelligently into God’s purpose for His people.

So, I’m hoping we can take some time and think through what we’ve studied, and come to a personal decision about whether these things are true, and if they are, what are their implications to each of us personally?

God has a very specific purpose and goal for us. If this is it, what are we going to do about it? What will occupy our prayers and our study? Do we genuinely want to know where we are now spiritually, where we need to be, and how to get there?

Or- we could take the position of the majority, which would be,

“I don’t know what you’re talking about; these aren’t the things I’m learning on Sundays, and I’d much rather just keep on the path I’m on; plus, the idea of suffering, for whatever reason, isn’t exactly appealing to me, life is hard enough as it is.”

In 2 Tim. 1:15, we see what the Church at the end of the first century did in response to Paul’s teaching;

(Timothy), that good thing which was committed to you, hold on to by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me.

In our generation, you can kiss popularity goodbye if you intend to go on to all the Lord has desired for us.

We are facing difficult times in the very near future, even more so than what we are going through now, and the only way we will be able to navigate those times and remain inwardly stable is if our focus is on eternity.

The wonder and glory of our destiny have to become our obsession and strength. That which is seen is temporal; that which is not seen is eternal. And as we’re reminded in Col. 3:1-4 and Rom. 8:18; “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. . . The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

If the messages we hear on Sundays are limited to the “things of earth”, “the things below”; of how to deal with situations, people, families, jobs, etc. how will people discover, let alone meditate on, “the things above”? We need both, but mostly we

need to have our minds and hearts raised above, where Christ is seated; and we need to know what that means.

We can't live in the reality of things that have never been explained to us, and the enemy has made sure that these truths are absent from our contemporary pulpits. Why would he allow us, maybe even encourage us, to go to church our whole lives and learn everything in the Bible except what we need most?

We know why- he doesn't want us equipped for a battle on his ground – what Paul calls “the heavenly places”; the place of spiritual life. If he can keep us on earth, then to some extent, he can remain in dominion over us. Since we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, our victory or loss isn't determined by earthly warfare, like intellectual debates and arguments, but by *spiritual* warfare.

Ok, that's enough for tonight, but please consider the possibility that the Church at large is in the condition it's in because it's not learning and applying the things that matter most in this life, and then pray that the Lord will provide all of us abundant opportunities, somewhere, somehow, to more fully understand the counsels of the Godhead.

And don't forget all we've learned in past studies on what an overcomer actually is. He's not a sinless, super-Christian, he's simply a man or woman who has come to realize that the only One Who can live the Christian life is Christ, so he's given up on himself and all of his so-called resources, he's turned his back on himself (which is what picking up our cross is all about) and he has cast himself on Christ as His only hope of life in the Spirit.

He sees Christ as the Author and Finisher of his faith and he trusts in the Lord to complete what He's begun. He has replaced self-expectation with faith in Christ and has decided that that is where he wants to live; as a person who has no desire apart from Christ receiving the honor and glory He deserves – nothing else matters as much as that. Now that he belongs to the Lord, he gladly counts all things as loss in order to be able to abide in Christ as his life.

And even though that mindset is ripped away from him daily by the world, the flesh and the devil; he refuses to compromise with what he knows in his heart is true, so

as almost a daily 'prodigal' he runs home into the arms of His Father for forgiveness and restoration, and from there he begins again – and the Lord restores him and holds his hand as they move forward together. The overcomer is simply a child of His Father looking to Him for all that is needed in this life, and the one to come.