

How to Overcome Everything

- *the time of the Judges, Israel strayed from God for many years. They were involved in idolatry and guilty of many other sins. As a result, they became impoverished both spiritually and physically and severely oppressed by their enemies. However, the hearts of Israel began to soften and they began to sorrow over their many sins and failures and their unfaithfulness to God. “And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.” (1 Samuel 7:2b).*
- *God in His love and mercy raised up a prophet named Samuel to bring Israel back to Himself. In spite of their many years of rebellion the prophet Samuel had a wonderful word of hope for them. “Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 7:3).*
- *The first step in overcoming everything is turning to God “with all your heart.” If we are half-hearted we will never experience victory in our lives because “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:8). We need to fully seek the Lord. Otherwise our walk with God will be marred by inconsistency and our lives will be described by the expression, “One step forward and two steps back.”*
- *The way we return to the Lord with all our hearts is by putting away anything that steals our devotion from God—“put away the foreign gods.” We must also “prepare our hearts for the LORD” in a similar way that a farmer prepares the land to receive seed—the ground must be broken up and softened, and the weeds and rocks removed. This preparation of our heart takes place as we seek the Lord in prayer and meditate on His Word.*
- *We need to realign our priorities with God’s priorities. The purpose of our lives must be above all else to “serve Him only.” Selfishness is where we put ourselves ahead of others and especially ahead of God. Selfishness guarantees we will live a defeated, unfruitful, and miserable life.*
- *Returning to the Lord requires change on our part, but God will always respond and the ultimately result will be glorious. God will deliver us from all our enemies and the sins and burdens that oppress, rob, and crush us. “He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”*

- *Israel immediately and whole-heartedly responded to the words of the prophet Samuel. “So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.” (1 Samuel 7:4).*
- *Samuel then called Israel together for prayer where they would seek God’s blessings and direction. “And Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.” (1 Samuel 7:5). The name Mizpah in Hebrew has the meaning of “look-point or height” and it comes from the Hebrew word that conveys the idea of expectation or hope. Samuel called Israel to higher ground above their problems, failures, and fears, so they could see God’s faithfulness and once again be filled with godly hope and expectation.*
- *As Israel gathered at Mizpah they sought God. “So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.” (1 Samuel 7:6).*
- *We need to own our sin, and not deflect it away by blaming others. Recognizing and confessing our sin is the first step to overcoming.*
- *Israel acknowledged their impoverished spiritual state and their need for God to refresh and renew them as they drew water and poured it out before the Lord in a symbolic act of contrition. “Arise, cry out in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him For the life of your young children, Who faint from hunger at the head of every street.” (Lamentations 2:19). “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws.” (Psalm 22:15a).*
- *At Mizpah they humbled themselves before God through fasting and confessing their sins. Samuel judged them at Mizpah, not to condemn them, but to show them where they failed to prevent them from repeating these behaviours. “And they fasted that day, and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.”*
- *Once Israel turned to God and sought Him whole-heartedly we might have expected things to have become immediately easier. Instead, Israel’s enemies rose up and prepared to attack. The Philistines were not going to let Israel out of their grip so easily. “Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.” (1 Samuel 7:7a).*

- *To experience victory requires us to fight. Overcoming is not a passive activity.*
- *Some Christians become dismayed when they begin to seek God and learn to walk with Him because sometimes instead of things becoming better, they face new challenges or temptations. However, even though the enemy intends to stumble them through these tribulations, God is there to strength our resolve to serve Him and to learn to put our trust fully in Him.*
- **“And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. So the children of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 7:7b-8). The phrase “do not cease” shows us the importance of persevering in prayer, and the power of corporate prayer. If “one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight” suggests the exponential power of corporate prayer. (Deuteronomy 32:30).**
- *Samuel’s responded to Israel’s cries and the dire circumstances they faced by sacrificing a lamb to the Lord. “And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.” (1 Samuel 7:9).*
- *However, Samuel didn’t simply take any lamb, but a suckling lamb, one that was tender and helpless. This was the same Lamb that the prophet Isaiah foresaw in Isaiah 53:7: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”*
- *Surrounded by an enemy army that was preparing to pounce upon them, Samuel took a helpless baby lamb that had not yet been weaned and in the sight of all of Israel, cut its throat, collected the blood and burned its body on the altar. As Samuel did this he declared before God and all Israel, the One who would be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world and vanquish our enemies once and for all! Samuel then called on the Lord God Almighty who in His tender mercy would deliver Israel.*
- *As Israel watched the suckling lamb being sacrificed, something marvelous happened; the Lion of Judah roared and struck fear in all the enemies of Israel. As the Philistines fled Israel pursued. “Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.” (1 Samuel 7:10). I love the paradox that Jesus is both the sacrifice for sin and the victory over sin, the Lion of Judah!*

- *The men of Israel left Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and drove them beyond Beth Car. “And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car.” (1 Samuel 7:11). While Mizpah speaks of hope and expectation, Beth Car in Hebrew means “House of the Lamb” or “House of pasture lands for lambs.” They received the victory they had been seeking from God and they no longer had to hope, because deliverance was theirs! They now dwelt with the Lamb and found rest and pasture for their souls.*
- *Once God secured a wonderful victory for Israel, Samuel did something extremely important that believers sometimes neglect to do. Samuel established a place where they could return in times of difficulty to remember God’s faithfulness and deliverance. “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.”” (1 Samuel 7:12).*
- *Samuel set up a stone as a memorial between Mizpah and Shen. While Mizpah means hope, Shen in Hebrew means, “tooth, rocky jagged outcropping.” Shen can refer to those difficult and painful times we sometimes face and where we get our expression, “between a rock and a hard place.” Ebenezer in Hebrew means “Stone of Help.” When we face fearful or difficult circumstances we need to remember all the times God has been there and helped us. We need to continually go back to those memorials and remember God’s faithfulness.*
- *Standing between Mizpah, our hope in God, and Shen the difficulties and hardships that confront us is Ebenezer—our Stone of Help—Jesus the Chief Cornerstone upon which our lives and salvation are built.*
- *We need to remember that “Thus far the LORD has helped us”—and He will continue to help us. “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”” (Hebrews 13:5-6).*
- *The conclusion is that Israel found peace and security in God. “So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.” (1 Samuel 7:13-14).*
- *Israel overcame their enemies “and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.” However, for us to maintain the victories God has given us*

and to experience even more victories we need to keep our eyes on that suckling lamb who is our sacrifice—Jesus. While Samuel lived, Israel was reminded of God’s faithfulness. However, when Samuel died the people soon forgot. Samuel built the memorial where he placed the Ebenezer stone, but each person needed to build their own memorial.

- *Jesus is described as the Rock of our Salvation and is our strength and the place of safety where we can enjoy security and protection from the attacks of the enemy. “Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.” (Psalm 95:1–2).*
- *While we know that our God is Almighty there is another aspect of Jesus that we need to not only keep in mind but embrace and experience daily—His gentleness. “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me, So my feet did not slip.” (Psalm 18:35-36).*
- *We can rest in the strength of God as He leads us to hide in the cleft of the rock from the attacks of the enemy. “When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” (Psalm 61:2b). However, even though a rock can be depicted as a solid place, to rest in the cleft of the Rock is also a soft place filled with God’s comfort and tenderness. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4a).*
- *Although Israel had often been rebellious and stubborn, God’s words to Israel are filled with love and tenderness. “I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them.” (Hosea 11:3-4).*
- *When we are crushed and overwhelmed and we do not know where to turn, Jesus is there to comfort us. He is gentle and kind and will not turn us away but will take us up in His embrace to heal us and give us victory. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29).*
- *Jesus is kind to us even in the midst of our trials, struggles, and failures. He is not there to crush us but to rescue and heal us if we will simply turn to Him. “He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He*

will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.” (*Matthew 12:19-21*). *If we are bruised and broken He is there to embrace, comfort, and heal us.*

- *The Book of Revelation introduces the judgment against ungodliness and rebellion by depicting a scroll in the hands of God the Father. “And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” (Revelation 5:1).*
- *Once the scroll of God’s judgment was revealed, an important and vital question was posed. “Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”” (Revelation 5:2).*
- *However, no one either in Heaven or on earth or under the earth was found worthy to open the scroll and had the right and the power to open the scroll. “And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.” (Revelation 5:3).*
- *John responded to hearing the news that no one was found worthy to open the scroll with deep sorrow and great weeping. “So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.” (Revelation 5:4). The source of John’s profound sorrow was because the scroll needed to be opened so God’s judgment could be released. God’s judgment and justice will bring rebellion, sin, and all the works of the devil to an end. If the scroll could not be opened then evil and death would prevail for eternity and there would never be justice.*
- *However, God is just and righteous and He will never allow injustice to reign. Neither will He neglect to save those who call upon Him because He is also merciful and gracious. For this reason, He sent His Son to save those who would receive Him and to judge those who would not. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18).*
- *In the midst of John’s weeping and mourning one of the elders spoke words of comfort and joy—the Lion of Judah, the Messiah has overcome and is worthy to open the scroll! “But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”” (Revelation 5:5).*
- *As John raised his eyes to behold the Lion of Judah he saw quite a different sight—a Lamb standing in the midst of the throne of God as though it had been slain. “And I*

looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” (*Revelation 5:6-7*).

- *The Greek word that describes Jesus as the Lamb is unique as it is in the diminutive. It literally means, “little lamb” or “lambkin.” Of the 17 times that Jesus is described as the Lamb in the book of Revelation, each time this word “lambkin” is used.*
- *Although Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, He is also described as a tender Lamb. When Jesus appears to those who are in rebellion He will roar like a lion and bring judgment. But to those who have put their faith in Him He comes as a tender Lamb to comfort and heal. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (*Revelation 21:4*).*
- *The tender Lamb found in Revelation is the one prophesied in 1 Samuel 7 as he sacrificed that suckling lamb so Israel could be delivered and have victory over their enemies.*
- *We do not overcome in our strength but by the blood of that tender Lamb, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on Calvary. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (*Revelation 12:11*). As we embrace the tenderness and love that is seen through Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary our lives will be changed and our hearts will be transformed so we can live overcoming lives.*
- *We overcome through the blood of the Lamb by faith.*
- *We express love as we share our testimony and agree with God’s Word.*
- *We give ourselves whole heartedly to God as we place ourselves in His hands, with a certain hope of our future.*
- *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (*1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV*).*
- *As we are able to receive God’s kindness, we can begin to learn to be kind to ourselves. Being kind to ourselves does not mean making excuses for our failures but to embrace His forgiveness and love so that we can learn to live an overcoming life in Jesus.*

- *Apostle Paul went through many hardships, trials, betrayals, and distressing circumstances. “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings,” (2 Corinthians 6:3–5). In the midst of everything he faced he need to answer the question, “Is Jesus enough?”*
- *In all of Paul’s writings he clearly had the answer that enabled him to overcome everything. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13). Jesus is always enough!*