

# Spiritual Growth that Overcomes Sin!

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- [ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.
- Open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 19, if you would. If you take notes and you want to write something down, I want to talk to you about spiritual growth that overcomes sin.
- Spiritual growth that overcomes sin. Paul's ending up the book of 2 Corinthians. Lord willing, Sunday night we will finish 2 Corinthians and be moving on to two new books.
- By popular demand of one, we will be in Romans on Sunday mornings. And then we'll be doing Genesis Sunday night and Thursday night. So we'll finish up 2 Corinthians.
- You'll be praying that the Lord will use this message and the others. And then as we move to those other books. Read with me if you would. 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 19. Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you?
- [ 1 : 07 ] We speak before God in Christ, but we do all things dearly beloved for your edifying. For I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as you would not.
- Lest there be debates and envians and wraths and strifes and backbiting and whisperings and swellings and tumults. Lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall be well many of which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.
- This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before and foretell you as if I were present the second time of being absent.
- Now I write to them which heretofore have sinned and to all others that if I come again, I will not spare.
- The apostle Paul is about to make a third trip, about to go back over to see his church, and he says, when I come this time, I will not spare.
- [ 2 : 18 ] This is the third time I'm coming to you. Chapter 13, verse 1. He's written them one letter, possibly a second letter that's not in the scriptures. Titus has been to see them.
- This is his third trip in, and he's warning them that they need to mature. This is a very immature church. If you got your Bible open there, look up to verse 19 and circle the purpose that every pastor ought to have.
- The apostle Paul said, dearly beloved, for your edifying. His goal was to edify. So tonight we're going to talk about actually sin and getting some sin out of the church.
- And the last phrase is the one that you would like to jump up with. Verse 2 says, I will not spare. But verse 19, he starts off saying, for your edifying.
- Father in heaven, I pray that you would open this passage of scripture and you would help us to learn it, help us to put it in our hearts, help us as we walk with you. I pray, God, that you would mature us.

[ 3 : 18 ] I pray that you would help me to become who ought to be in you. I pray, dear God, that you'd be with the folks of our church and grow us and perfect us and mature us. Help us to leave sin behind and help us to seek out holiness, to seek you out and have you work in our hearts.

And I'll give you great honor and glory and praise for all that you do. In Jesus' precious name, amen. First thing I want you to look at in verse 19, Paul's not trying to excuse himself.

Paul's not trying to excuse. You know, they've been attacking him. In 1 Corinthians, he gets attacked. And in 2 Corinthians, he gets attacked. They've made fun of the way he looks. They've made fun of the way he talks.

They've made fun of the way he writes letters. They have been out to get him. And he says, I am not trying to excuse myself. Look at verse 19 again. Think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you?

Now, I'm not trying to excuse myself. But everything we do, we do for your edifying. Here's what Paul knew. And here's what you have to know as you serve God. And that is Paul knew that he was looking to God to judge him.

[ 4 : 22 ] I want to do right. I want to honor God. I want to please God. I'm not concerned about what you Corinthians think about my ministry. I want God to judge me. 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 3, he said, But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you.

Or of man's judgment. Yea, I don't even judge my own self. For I know nothing by myself. Yet am I not hereby justified. He that judges me is the Lord.

So Paul said, I'm writing this letter. And I'm not trying to clear me up. I'm not trying to get you to like me over those Judaizers that are coming down. I'm not trying to defend my ministry. I'm just trying to build you up.

Paul's spiritual children don't appreciate him. They don't appreciate him probably because they're not dedicated. There's a lack of consecration. But what they thought of Paul might hurt him emotionally. But it didn't really make a difference in the truth or the ministry.

Paul's not on trial. And they are not his judges. Paul only cares about what God thinks of him. In Matthew 25, 21.

[ 5 : 25 ] I'm sure that's what Paul wanted to hear. Well done thou good and faithful servant. Paul's goal was to have God be pleased with him. He wasn't excusing himself.

The second thing he says in that same verse. Look if you went at verse 19. He said, I'm trying to edify the church. I'm trying to edify you. Verse 19. He says again, thank you that we excuse ourselves unto you.

We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things dearly beloved for your edifying. Underline that. For your edifying.

He said, and edifying is just a word that means building up. It's a word that means construction. It's a word that means bettering things. And so he says, I do everything I'm doing. And all the ministry I have is for your edifying.

The church is dealing with major sins. And they thought it was Paul who was stirring up the problems. But it was, Paul's got heart is, I want to solve problems. I want to strengthen the church.

[ 6 : 24 ] Paul loved his church like they were his spiritual brothers. But he never, ever wanted to hurt them. He never, ever wanted to hurt them. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 8.

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority. He said, I could brag about it. I could say more about me being the leader here. And about me being the apostle here. And about me being the man of God here.

And I could boast of my authority. And what's the authority for? Which the Lord has given us for. Would you say that word with me? The Lord has given us authority for what? Edification. And not for your destruction.

I should not be ashamed. So Paul said, I could boast of the authority I've been given. My authority is to build you up. Not tear you down. They weren't his judges.

But they were his responsibility. They weren't his judges. But they were his responsibility. And I'd just like to take you to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. A passage of scripture as a church we ought to know.

[ 7 : 24 ] It fits very well with be, do, serve, train. It fits with the idea of training. It fits with the idea of the foundations and discipleship that everybody I think ought to get involved in.

The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. And he gave some apostles and some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. God gave some gifted people to the church in verse 11.

And he said the purpose of those men, the purpose of these leaders, the purpose of these people is the perfecting of the saints. Underline that in your Bible. The maturing of the saints for the work of the ministry.

For the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Unto a perfect man, a mature man, a complete man.

Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. By the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

[ 8 : 21 ] But speaking the truth and love may grow up into him in all things. Which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies.

According to the effectual working and the measure of every part. Make it increase in the body unto the edifying of itself and love. I hope you got your Bible open there. Would you please open it? Let me just show you some things real quickly.

Paul's a pastor. His job's to edify. His job's to build up. That's the leadership of this church. Every one of our missionaries. When you go somewhere, you need to be very careful. Your authority is to build up people.

Not tear down people. Your authority is to help mature them in Christ. And look what he says in verse 12. He says the job, or verse 11, he says these gifted people are given. Verse 12, for the perfecting of the saints.

For the maturing of the saints. So the saints learn how to do the ministry. So the body of Christ will be edified. Verse 13, that they will get to be a perfect man. We want a church of mature people that love Jesus.

[ 9 : 20 ] That are full of Christ. That they learn about doctrine. That they don't get tossed to and fro. And we always want to speak the truth in love. We want the body to grow. But here Paul comes.

And he says in verse 2. Chapter 13 and verse 2. Paul says, you know what? I don't want you to suffer chastisement. I don't want you as a church to suffer chastisement.

I don't want to have to come into you and rip on you. You see what they said was when you write letters. You write really tough letters. And your letters are mean. But when you're in person, you're a real nice guy.

You're a real nice guy. But you're not impressive either way. And he said, well, when I come this next time, I don't want to have to be mean. I don't want to have to be ugly. So y'all need to get some things right.

If they didn't get right from the letter, he'd be a lot tougher in person. Verse 2. Remember what he said. I will not spare. I told you before and I foretell you as if I were present the second time and being absent now.

[ 10 : 16 ] I write to you and say to you, I will come again. I will. If I come again, I will not spare. Look, if you would, at chapter 12 and verse 21. Paul didn't want to have to deal with sin.

It's hard to discipline your children. It's hard if a pastor loves his people and as a spiritual father. And he says in verse 21, When Paul had to deal with their sin, it would humble him.

It's the idea that he would be broken. He would be grieving. He would be sad. He would be embarrassed. He would be humbled when he had to deal with them. It would be like he was weeping or crying at a funeral.

It wasn't like, get your lives right with God. It was like, man, I don't want to have to deal with sin. I don't want to have to call your hand. I don't want to have to come across that way. That's probably why when we first started 2 Corinthians, he had canceled a visit.

They were mad at him. He told them in the 1 Corinthians, I'm coming your way. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he says, I didn't come. Very likely he didn't come. He says it in the letter more than once. I didn't want to have to face you.

[ 11 : 38 ] I didn't want to deal with these sins. I don't want to deal with this. They seem to have responded to his letter. But some more false teachers have arrived. Look at what he says in 2 Corinthians 12, 20.

Every sin he's going to mention in this verse has to do with a divided, split church. He says, I fear lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would.

I think I'm going to find you in a way I don't want to find you. I don't want to find you like this. I think that you, and I think you're going to find me in a way you don't want to find me. I don't want to come there and find y'all in the ways I'm about to mention.

And by the way, you don't want me to come and find you that way. Because I, because I'm going to, I'm going to be rough. I'm going to call sin, sin. I'm going to get in your faces about it. Look what his sins were, sins they would have.

He said, I don't want to find this. Lest there be debates and envyings and wraths and strifes and backbitings and whisperings and swellings and tumults.

[ 12 : 39 ] Debates. That's pretty obvious, isn't it? Jealousy in the church, envying each other, explosions of anger, wrath. They seem to be having strifes, plots and intrigues.

These backbitings and whisperings are going on in the church. Somebody's feeling super important. They're swelling up. There's a disorder in the church. They were not living out what he told them to in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

1 Corinthians chapter 13. He had stopped the end of chapter 12. He's talking about the spiritual gifts. And he's talking about spiritual gifts. And they were playing the game of having all these spiritual gifts. He said, wait a minute. I want to show you a better way.

He said, you guys are all so proud of the gifts you have. But let's move. There's a better way. It all ought to be about charity. It all ought to be about love. And it's not being about that.

Every gift and everything we do in the church. God wants us to be in love with him and in love with each other. And there ought to not be this going on. They had sins of division. There are also some gross sins of the flesh going on.

[ 13 : 38 ] Verse 21. Lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you. Break my heart. Make me weep and cry like I was at a funeral. I will be well.

Many have sinned already. And you haven't repented. Of uncleanness and fornication. Y'all got wild parties going on. You got sex junk going on.

You got immorality going on. You're living like you lived before you got saved. Paul said, I don't want to see that. I don't have to deal with that.

Born again people do live differently. Born again people God has done a work in their life. And Paul said, I don't want to see that going on. So I'd like to talk to you tonight just briefly.

Just a few questions I'd ask. Let's look at our own growth in holiness. What is our opinion of someone who shows us the truth of God's word when it's contrary to our own?

[ 14 : 38 ] What do you think about somebody who stands up and holds the Bible and reads the Bible and patiently works their way through the Bible verse by verse? You can't claim that they're picking on you. You can't claim they pick the verse and they tell you.

So what's your opinion of them? They didn't really love Paul very much. I'm not very happy with Paul right now. And Paul's been saying clearly what God said. And Paul is being even writing Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit speaking through him and they're not respecting him.

And his heart's broken. How do we respond to what God says that may be different than what we want in our lives? Do you do understand as born again Christians that every sin is us doing what we want to do, not what he wants us to do.

The basic sin in all the Bible is rebellion. It's the pride to stand up and say, this is what I want. Because Adam and Eve, that's what they did. He said, don't eat of this tree.

They ate of that tree. They said, we will decide what we will do. We will make our own decisions. And sometimes, sometimes we ought to think and ask, how do we respond to what God says when it's different than what we want?

[ 15 : 42 ] How often do we come to church, come to the Bible, come to prayer time, come to our devotional time and walk up to God and say, God, I'm not here to tell you anything. I'm not here to have an opinion. I'm not here to discuss it with you.

I'm here for you to show me and you to tell me what to do. How sensitive are we to the Holy Spirit and his work in our lives? How sensitive are we to the Holy Spirit and his work in our lives?

Can I just say one of the biggest dangers of a church like ours and people like you is you've been to church too many times. You've heard the Bible so much and you know so much Bible that it's almost like you're taking a vaccination.

And it's like you, we get used to God and we get used to the Bible and we get used to truth and we don't let the Holy Spirit deal with us anymore. We don't come to church and say, Holy Spirit, deal with me. We don't open our Bibles to read them in the daytime.

As we go to read our Bibles and say, Holy Spirit, deal with me. We come to hear what the preacher has to say. Yeah, we learn. Yeah, we fill our heads up. But how do we respond? How dedicated and consecrated are we to the Lord Jesus and what he wants in our lives?

[ 16 : 53 ] For the lay people in our church, for those who aren't going to be missionaries, you know, it's pretty easy for you to understand that maybe a missionary is a weird person because they go to God and they say, not my will, but yours.

Not my will, but yours. Here's a blank sheet of paper. I've signed the bottom. You fill in the details. And we kind of understand that when we talk about it so much a missionary, but sometimes we understand that that's for everybody.

That's for every man in this room. That's for every woman in this room. That's for every family in this room. And every one of us ought to be coming and saying, God, I'm not here to raise a good family. I'm not here to prosper.

I'm not here. I came to take up my cross. I came to die. I came to not do my will. I came to do your will. Holy Spirit, speak to me through the word of God. Holy Spirit, deal with me.

Holy Spirit, teach me. I want to consecrate my life to you. Question for all of us. And Apostle Paul knows things I don't know. Apostle Paul's heard rumors.

[ 17 : 53 ]    Apostle Paul's probably had some letters written to him. Maybe the Holy Spirit's revealed some things to him. And he names sins that are going on. He knows what the church is doing. But here's the question. Is there sin in our lives that we haven't repented of?

You see, what he's talking about tonight is God didn't put me in this church. Or God didn't give me this ministry. And God didn't make me an apostle to hurt you. God made me an apostle to edify you. But your growth is stunted because you are living in sin.

Your growth is stunted because there are sins you haven't repented of. Sins you haven't confessed. Sins you haven't turned away from. He says, I'm coming.

And I don't want to find you like that. And by the way, you don't want me to find you like that. Are we allowing the sin of pride and division to enter into our hearts?

You see, that's what ends up happening. Every one of us decide I'm right. And it's what I want. It's what I'm looking for. That's what's going on. And that's what's going on in this passage of scripture.

[ 19 : 00 ]    They're attacking Paul. They're accusing Paul. They're having debates and endings and wraths and strifes and backbitings and whisperings and swellings and tumults. Are we allowing the sin of pride and division to enter?

Last question. Are we dealing with gross sins of the flesh that need to be confessed and forsaken? I have no idea about anybody.

But listen to me. Can I just tell you this? There's a God in heaven and that's who you serve. And Paul, as a preacher, was going to rip face. I mean, he's coming and he's playing.

He says, I'm telling you, I will not spare. There. And can I just say to you, God's Holy Spirit is at work in your life. And you can't play with sin.

And you can't get away with sin. And you can't continue doing that. If you're going to heaven, you're saved. But you know, the day he saved you, the day he saved you, he predestined you to be conformed to the image of his son.

[ 19 : 59 ]    And he's bringing all these things in your life. What's being done in your life that's hindering what God's trying to do? What kind of sin? Pornography. Pornography. You know, nobody knows about it.

Nobody knows. Man, we live in a day when it's so prevalent and so easy. Hey, pornography. Maybe it's pornography. Maybe it's pride. Maybe it's I'm lifted up with thinking who I am and I'm not really surrendering to what God's will is for my life.

But what is it? They had sins of the flesh. Uncleanliness. There were wild parties going on. They were doing wrong. You know, sad thing about just a regular preacher like me is I don't know what you're doing.

And I don't know if you're failing. And I couldn't name your sins for you. But they will come out. And I'm not the one that can scream at you and yell at you.

But there is a God in heaven who disciplines and chastises his people. And Paul said, I'm not here to hurt you. And I love you. And in all honesty, the reason Paul would come in that church and fuss at them and call out their sin would be so they wouldn't suffer the consequences of their sin.

[ 21 : 10 ]    So they wouldn't suffer the consequences of their sin. So there ought to be some spiritual growth that overcomes sin. Listen, and I'm through.

We'll pray for David and Katie. Some of us have allowed grace to be an excuse to play with sin. Some of us have said, well, God forgives me, so it's okay.

Some of the Peruvian guys, they came to me one day and they had done some things wrong. And this was one of their jokes that they had back in the early part of our ministry. They said, we can go do it.

We'll just confess it later. He'll forgive us. We can go do it. We can confess it later. And he'll forgive us. That's true, isn't it?

They were already forgiven before they acted like idiots. And you are forgiven. But horrible consequences. Paul said, God gave me to a church and gave me authority to build you up.

[ 22 : 12 ] Not to tear you down. Not to hurt you. I am here to help you. So I would ask you, what's going on in your life? Go back over your life.

Just a few minutes of this little invitation time and think, are these division sins coming into my life? This strife and arguing and debates, are they coming into my life? This pride and swelling up, is that coming up into my life?

Do I have any gross immorality in my life? That nobody knows about just me and God, but am I allowing that in my life? Hey, young people, are you allowing that in your life? Because you see, God's growing you and you're allowing sin to stop you.

And Paul said, I'm here to help build you up. Father God in heaven, I ask you to work in our lives. God, I ask you to build your church. I know these are your people. They're not mine.

I know, God, that I am here to edify them and not to destroy them. I know I'm here, dear God, to call their attention. And Holy Spirit, I pray that you have done that with the text tonight.

[ 23 : 12 ] I pray that your people have waked up and realized there's sin in our lives. There's things we need to confess. There are things that are holding us back. We've been playing with sin and playing with gross sexual sin and gross physical sin.

Or even these prideful sins. These sins are even sometimes harder to notice in our own selves. I pray, God, you deal with your people. God, build your church.

Take us to maturity. Help us grow. Honor yourself in us. And I'll give you praise. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

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