



## Sermon Outline

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### **NEW LIFE IN CHRIST — AN OVERCOMING FAITH**

ROMANS 12:1-2, 21

*What do I want our congregation to know as a result of this sermon?*

- » *Because of God's mercy, biblical disciples offer themselves as living sacrifices through daily choices.*
- » *Living sacrifices pursue holiness, which is their reasonable service.*
- » *As demonstrated by Sabina Wurmbrand and other persecuted Christians, biblical disciples can overcome evil with good through the power of Christ living in them.*
- » *That same type of biblical discipleship is something I can attain through daily sacrificial living, as Christ lives in and through me.*

*What is the connection to the free IDOP video?*

*Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, inspired by Christ's example, were exemplars of sacrificial Christian living. As they lived their lives for the sake of Christ, they overcame evil with good.*

#### NOTE TO PASTORS/COMMUNICATORS:

The purpose of this resource is to provide you with biblical content in order to build a sermon to support your church's participation in the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians (IDOP). There is likely too much content in this resource to create one 20-to-30-minute sermon. That is intentional and allows you to use the resource to develop your sermon as you sense the Holy Spirit's leading for your congregation. One additional option to prayerfully consider is creating a multi-part sermon series to use during the first three weeks of November.

Email [PastorDavid@vom.org](mailto:PastorDavid@vom.org) with your ideas, comments, prayer requests and stories of how IDOP has impacted your family, group, class and church.



## Introduction

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The highest grossing film franchise **in the world** garners total worldwide box office revenues of 22.56 billion U.S. dollars. The top four film franchises gross nearly 50 BILLION dollars globally.

Why are people from Moscow to Miami, from Sydney to Stockholm, drawn to the stories in these film franchises?

Perhaps it is because we live in a world where humans have a common struggle against evil, and it is a continual battle. Disease, disaster and delinquent behavior prompts us to hope for something good — something better.

Biblical disciples live the type of lives that continually encounter evil. However, we are given a source greater than any evil, and we can experience daily victory as we overcome evil with good.

*Transition Statement: What does it look like for someone to find life? I want you to watch this video and see the possibilities for your own faith.*

PLAY VIDEO: *FINDING LIFE* (download the video and additional free resources at [vom.org/IDOP](http://vom.org/IDOP))

*Transition Statement: Sabina found a full and meaningful life as she trusted in Christ. This new life then dramatically moved her to intentionally lose her life for Christ's sake day by day.*

### I. THE SOURCE OF OVERCOMING FAITH (ROMANS 12:1-2)

#### A. The Mercy of God (Romans 12:1)

- i. God's mercy is offered to us solely via Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. (John 14:6; Hebrews 9:22)
- ii. Because of the mercy of God, biblical disciples can present ourselves as living sacrifices.
  1. Presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice is an active pursuit. (John 15:4)
    - a. Biblical disciples present ourselves as instruments of righteousness, forsaking the dominion of sin over our lives because we have been brought from death to life in Christ. (Romans 6:13, 16)
    - b. Biblical disciples choose daily to die to self and lose their lives for Christ's sake. (Luke 9:23-26)



2. Living sacrifices die in order for Christ to live in and through them. (Galatians 2:20)
  - a. Christ living in and through me embraces the position of a servant. Jesus willingly gave up His position as God to take on the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:5-12)
  - b. Christ living in and through me compels me to love like Christ loved. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
  - c. Christ living in and through me results in submitting to God in all things. Jesus modeled what it means to submit to God's will in all things. (Luke 22:42)
  - d. Christ living in and through me empowers me to forgive, no matter the offense. Jesus forgave His enemies, even those who tortured and killed him. (Luke 23:34)

#### ILLUSTRATION

Armed Hindu extremists approached Kande's home in India, angry that he would not renounce his faith in Christ. Kande told his wife, Bindi, "No matter what happens to me, you should not give up your faith in Jesus." Kande and Bindi continued living for Christ, praying and trusting God each day. After repeated harassment, Kande was killed by a Hindu mob. Bindi's father suggested that she should stop following Jesus. But in replying to her father, Bindi repeated something she remembered Kande once saying: "I will live for Jesus or die for Jesus, but I will never turn back." Those who have died to self are willing to live for Christ, no matter the cost. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine, June 2021, pp. 4-5)

- iii. Living sacrifices develop lives of exemplary holiness. (Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 1:13-21)
  1. "Holiness" definition: separate, set apart, sacred to God, for a special purpose (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Strong's G40, *hagios*)
    - a. As we pursue holiness, the Father, who is holy, is glorified by our words and deeds. (Hebrews 12:14)
    - b. As we pursue holiness, our lives point to God's holiness. (1 Peter 1:15)
  2. Holiness is a pursuit or a process, not a one-time event. (1 Timothy 6:11)
    - a. Holiness is developed in our lives day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, resulting in intimacy with God and surrender to His will and way.

#### ILLUSTRATION

When we are "born again," we are spiritual babies, not fully developed (Hebrews 5:13-14). Everyone coos when a newborn is swaddled, sucking a pacifier. However, that same baby, as a 23-year-old still swaddled and sucking a pacifier, would be abnormal. Living things grow, and growing things change. Pursuing maturity is what God intended for us when He gave His one and only Son for our redemption.



- iv. Living sacrifices embrace a life of “spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1 ESV) Alternate translations are “your reasonable service” (KJV, NKJV) or “this is your true worship” (CSB).
  - 1. The Greek word Paul uses here for worship is *latría*. Paul’s original Jewish readers would have immediately thought of the priests who performed the sacred service. But Paul wanted to paint a distinct picture that just as the priest offered sacrifices, we offer our lives as living sacrifices, giving our very bodies to the service of God.
    - a. The spiritual worship of biblical disciples is not compartmentalized within a corporate weekly church gathering, a daily devotional or a family altar. Those are simply components of our spiritual worship. Our spiritual worship, expressed as reasonable service, is to daily live our lives for God’s purposes because of His redemption. (1 Peter 2:9)
- B. The Transformed Mind (Romans 12:2)
  - i. “Not conformed to this world” — Living sacrifices are not tossed to and fro in a chaotic culture but are grounded in an eternal perspective. (Colossians 3:1)  
J.B. Phillips paraphrased Hebrews 12:1-2 as “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within.”
  - ii. “But transformed” — Living sacrifices have experienced the transforming grace of God. His grace is a metamorphosis, making us totally new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
  - iii. “Renewing of mind” — God’s grace gives new perspective to biblical disciples.

#### INSIGHT INTO “BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND”

This “renewing” is from the Greek root for new in quality (*kainos*), not new in time (*chronos*). When God makes us new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), the old is gone, including our old patterns of thought. We are transformed into a redeemed creation, and that includes our mind.

- iv. “Through testing” — Living sacrifices reposition opposition as a tool for discernment of God’s will and way. When we encounter opposition, we seek God and His will more intently. (Romans 12:2)
- v. “Discover His will” — Living sacrifices see God’s will as good, acceptable and perfect, no matter the outcome for our own lives. (Romans 12:2)

#### ILLUSTRATION

Jesus did not succumb to the desires of a culture and what it was seeking in a Messiah: a political savior. Instead, He brought new meaning to the kingdom, modeled an eternal perspective, agonized over His death (sweating drops of blood), and ultimately discovered God’s will as He prayed in Gethsemane, “Not my will, but Your will be done” (Luke 24:42). He was then obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8).



*Transition Statement: I encourage you to study this week the text we are not discussing today (Romans 12:3-20, brief outline included). It is rich in describing the nature, character and activity of faith that overcomes in the life of a biblical disciple. For now, let's spend our final moments today being encouraged by the victory of overcoming faith that is found in Romans 12:21.*

## II. THE EVIDENCE OF OVERCOMING FAITH (ROMANS 12:9-20)

- a. Genuine love
- b. Hold fast to that which is good
- c. Showing honor
- d. Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord
- e. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, constant in prayer
- f. Generous and hospitable
- g. Bless those who persecute you
- h. Empathy and compassion (rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep)
- i. Harmonious humility
- j. Do not repay evil for evil
- k. Live peaceably with all
- l. Demonstrate confidence in God as just
- m. Kindness to those who oppose us

## III. THE VICTORY OF OVERCOMING FAITH (ROMANS 12:21)

- A. Big picture overview of “do not be overcome by evil” (Romans 12:21)
  - i. Biblical disciples living sacrificial, holy lives will face opposition in an effort to thwart or silence our witness. Paul does not write “if you are confronted with evil” but assumes, based on his own experience, that biblical disciples will be confronted with evil. Jesus told us that we would be persecuted. (John 15:20)



- ii. This opposition is categorized as “evil,” fundamentally because it is acting against or in opposition to the message of Christ. (3 John 11)
- iii. Biblical disciples must not be disheartened, discouraged or derailed by evil but stand in the face of evil, pursuing Christ and His purposes. (2 Timothy 2:24)
- iv. What is “evil”? (v. 21: “Do not be overcome by evil”)
  - 1. What types of evil do biblical disciples encounter?
    - a. Our own flesh
      - i. What is the *flesh*?
        - 1. Romans 8:7-8 is the closest thing to a biblical definition: “The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
        - 2. The flesh is the “old me” who used to rebel against God prior to trusting Christ for new life.
      - ii. What is the nature of the flesh?
        - 1. Romans 8:8 — those in the realm of the flesh cannot please God
        - 2. Galatians 5:17 — in conflict with Spirit
        - 3. Romans 8:6 — mind controlled by flesh leads to death
        - 4. Galatians 5:19-21 — deeds of the flesh are evident
        - 5. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 — harmful desires that plunge people into ruin (example in v. 10 is love of money)
      - iii. Practical ways to stand against the flesh
        - 1. Put on the Lord Jesus and make no provision for the flesh. (Romans 13:14)
        - 2. We who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires. (Galatians 5:24)
        - 3. Walk in obedience according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:13)
        - 4. Make daily confessions as our lives are lived by faith in God in all things. (Galatians 2:20)
        - 5. Watch our mouths by practicing speech that reflects our godly contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6)
    - b. Our fallen world



- i. What is the fallen world?
  1. A world impacted by sin
    - a. Sin entered the world because of disobedience. (Genesis 3:17-19)
    - b. Sin infects all humanity. (Romans 5:12; Romans 3:23)
  2. A creation that groans, affected by the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin (Romans 8:20, 22)
    - a. Quote: "Creation's anguish is a witness and reflection of the cataclysm it is for creatures to reject their Creator." Jon Bloom, "Groaning, Waiting, Hoping: How to Live in a Fallen Fragile World." June 22, 2020.
  
- ii. What are the characteristics of our fallen world?
  1. It is at enmity with God. (James 4:4)
  2. It is temporal. (2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 7:31)
  3. It is a place where Satan is allowed some dominion. (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26)
  
- iii. Standing against our fallen world
  1. Live as strangers and aliens, recognizing the temporal nature of this world. (1 Peter 2:11)
  2. Run the race God has given us with endurance. (Hebrews 12:2)
  3. Fix our eyes on Jesus. (Hebrews 12:3)
  
- c. Satan
  - i. Satan's nature and character
    1. Satan is the liar and father of lies. (John 8:44)
    2. Satan's activity in the world is death and destruction. (John 10:10a; 1 Peter 5:8)
    3. Satan is a stumbling block to biblical disciples. (Matthew 16:23)
    4. Satan is the tempter. (Matthew 4:1)



5. Satan is a schemer. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

ii. Standing Against Satan

1. Memorize and use the truth of scripture to combat the lies of Satan, as Jesus modeled. (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)

2. Abide in Christ, who gives us true life. (John 10:10b)

3. Submit to God and resist Satan. (James 4:7)

4. Learn how others in the global body of Christ stand firm despite suffering, and be inspired by their example. (1 Peter 5:9)

5. Put on the armor of God each day in prayer. (Ephesians 6:11-16)

6. Know that Satan is a defeated foe through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. (Revelation 12:11)

B. Overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

i. What does “overcome evil with good” (v. 21) mean in this context for the biblical disciple?

1. Biblical disciples do not return evil for evil. (Romans 12:17)

2. Biblical disciples extend to others the grace God gave us. (Romans 12:14)

3. Biblical disciples forgive as the Lord forgave us. (Ephesians 4:32)

4. Biblical disciples do not pursue vengeance but demonstrate kindness to those who oppose us. (Romans 12:20)

#### ILLUSTRATION

She stood over her husband’s coffin. There were tears in her eyes, but her voice was strong. The bruises on her body told the mourners that she, too, had been beaten. As Christians, she and her husband had refused to take a Kikuyu tribal oath that wasn’t consistent with their Christian faith. For this, her husband was beaten to death, and she was beaten and hospitalized. The crowd was still, silenced by the power of the widow’s words and her will. “I, as his widow, also tell all of you, in the presence of my dead husband, that I hate none of those who killed him. I love the killers. I forgive them, knowing that Christ has died for them too.” No one in attendance that day would ever forget the widow’s words or her example of extreme forgiveness and grace. (Source: The Voice of the Martyrs, *Extreme Devotion*, VOM Books, 2015, p. 73)



- ii. What happens in the life of biblical disciples as they overcome evil with good?
  1. We will be the victor, no matter how our enemies respond. (Romans 12:20; 1 John 5:4)
  2. We have the opportunity to win those who oppose us to Christ. Paul lived this out in his own life. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)
  3. Greater is He who is in the lives of biblical disciples than anything in this world! (1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4-5)

#### ILLUSTRATION

“Mr. B” had been a Communist state prosecutor during the time Russia occupied Romania. He fell out of the good graces of the Party and was imprisoned by his own comrades. Once he was transferred from a prison where hunger reigned to a mine where the prisoners were given more food since they had to do hard slave labor. At the prison gate he was met by a stranger who immediately gave him something to eat. The stranger sat near him while he ate. He asked the stranger for how long he was sentenced. The answer was twenty years.

“What for?”

“For having given some food to a fugitive pastor sought by the police.”

“Who gave you such punishment for a good deed?”

“You were the state prosecutor at my trial. You did not recognize me, but I recognized you. I am a Christian. Christ taught us to reward evil with good. I wished to teach you that it is right to give food to a hungry man.”

(Richard Wurmbrand, *Reaching Toward the Heights*, 2009, p. 292)