

Christians are Exhorted to Overcome

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Christians are exhorted to overcome as Christ overcame. How did Jesus Christ overcome? He did not overcome after the manner of the religious ascetics. Had He overcome in that manner, He could not have been called the friend of publicans and sinners. On the other hand, Jesus Christ did not become a part of the religious establishment of His day. He died outside the camp (Heb. 13:12, 13). Like Christ, Christians overcome by suffering, not after the manner of religious ascetics. Prior to His death the Lord comforted His disciples and then told them they would suffer tribulation: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). God never promised the elect a rose garden or a highway without any detours or rough roads. All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer (II Tim. 3:12). All Christians suffer to an extent. The degree of suffering depends on our faithfulness in witnessing. Distinction must be made between Christ suffering for our sins and our suffering because of our sins. Much of our suffering is because of our sins, but His suffering was at Calvary for our sins. He suffered not only at Calvary but throughout His ministry. Wherever He preached, religionists were aroused and wanted to kill Him. He suffered for righteousness' sake. Recipients of grace who witness as we should will suffer for righteousness' sake. Nevertheless, we overcome through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Overcoming is continuous. God never begins something in His people without bringing it to completion. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). Although this verse is a prophetic statement, it has a present application.

Overcoming is impossible separate from the finished work of Christ. This is the ground of victory. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. The blood of the eternal covenant secures all the covenant gifts to the elect for all time (Heb. 13:20, 21). The blood of the Lamb signifies the death of Jesus Christ. This denotes the death of sin and the defeat of Satan himself. The death of Christ is the life of our hope and the assurance of our victory because Christ poured out His soul unto death, and He divided the spoil with the strong (Is. 53:10-12). The blood of the Lamb signifies the substitutionary death of Christ. Sin must be punished, and it was punished in the death of the Lord Jesus. The blood of the Lamb also signifies that Christ's death was effective for taking away our sins. The elect overcome because of the word of their testimony. Those who respond to the call of Jesus Christ as Judge are judged by Him, have fellowship with Him, and come out from an apostate institution with a testimony against that institution.

The elect owe their victory to the truth of which they are witnesses. (1) God has spoken, and what He has said has meaning. It is the communication of the mind of God to the mind of the elect: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Let His mind be our mind. Word is speech, and speech is, by definition, reason communicating itself. This is why the Lord Jesus called Himself "the Word." (2) The word God has spoken becomes a testimony. The business of the Christian is witnessing. Having the witness in himself, he sets to his seal that God is true (John 3:33). The Christian lives as a true witness and may die its martyr, as those who "loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). The elect overcome because they love not their lives unto death. One Christian martyr of the past said that death was much sweeter to him with the testimony of truth than life with its least denial.

We overcome by faith: "WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:1-4). Men naturally swim with the stream like a dead fish. Only a live fish can go against the stream. A person must be born of the Spirit of God to go against this evil world system. The whole world lies in wickedness (I John 5:19). The world has its tyrannies. There is the tyranny of public opinion, which already has its influence over many church members. There is a tyranny of present attractiveness. The world's sensuality has entered many religious institutions. Evidence of the senses is powerful. There is the tyranny of fashion and the spirit of society. These are all tyrannies with which we must contend. But the believer is overcoming. The only faith that is victorious is the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1). Victorious faith breaks loose from the world's customs and raises one above all circumstances. It ascends above the world's authority, example, influence, spirit, and religion. Victorious faith is the coronation of Jesus Christ in the heart. It is the faith which is anchored in Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus never concealed from His disciples the difficulties with which they must contend. But Jesus Christ our Head has overcome; therefore, His body will also overcome. He told the disciples they must suffer for righteousness' sake: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24, 25). "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world 3

shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). The same providential law is applicable to each individual believer. He must disown the authority of his selfish ego to live the life of the integrated person. The life of service constitutes dying in order to live. He who hates his life in the lower sense

will preserve his life in the higher sense. If the members of Christ's body do not overcome, they cast reflection on the Head who has perfectly gained the victory. Jesus Christ is victorious over hell, death, and the grave.

The Lord Jesus will grant the one overcoming to sit with Him on His throne as He overcame and is sitting with the Father on His throne: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). Many equate these two thrones. However, the throne in heaven where Jesus Christ is now sitting cannot be equated with David's throne on which He will sit when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. Peter distinguished the two thrones (Acts 2:29-35). Jesus Christ is now at the right hand of the Father on the Father's throne, but He will sit on His own throne, the throne of His father David. As Christ has two thrones—His and the Father's, the believer will be given authority "over the nations: And he shall rule them..." (Rev. 2:26, 27). This authority is in Christ. Therefore, the Christian is now seated in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph. 2:6), and he will rule and reign with Christ in the kingdom.

One must be an overcomer before he can experience the throne of the future. Like the Ephesian saints, he must overcome the leaving of quality love. Like the saints in Smyrna, he must be faithful unto death. After the manner of the overcomers in Pergamum, he must refuse the seductions where Satan's seat is located. Like those in Thyatira, he must separate from the depths of Satan. As the overcomers in Sardis, he must keep himself unspotted from this world's system. Like those in Philadelphia, he must maintain the place of dependence. Like the overcomers in Laodicea, he must be satisfied solely with Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ will be the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Christ's kingdom will be universal in extent (Ps. 72:8; Zech. 14:9). It will be righteous in administration (Ps. 72:1-7). His kingdom will be everlasting in duration (II Pet. 1:11). Think of the privilege of the one overcoming to sit with Jesus Christ on His throne. The love of Jesus Christ for His own passes

knowledge. The Son of God did not rest until He made man in His own image. He did not rest until He had assumed the form of man for the purpose of redeeming the fallen elect that they might once again have and experience that blessed image in which man was made. He cannot now rest at the Father's right hand until His elect are fashioned into His glorious image and sit with Him on His throne as He overcame and is now sitting on the throne of His Father.

Jesus Christ is not presently on the throne of His father David. He is on the Father's throne and will remain there until all His enemies are under His feet. He will then sit on His throne, and righteousness and peace will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. When He sits on His throne in the kingdom, He will then give the overcomer the honor of sitting with Him on His throne. Those who persevere now will reign with Him in the future: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..." (II Tim. 2:12). The verb for "suffer" is present active indicative of *hupomeno*, which means to persevere or endure. It is present tense; hence, it is now taking place. It is the mood of reality. "We shall also reign with Him" is a compound verb in the Greek (future active indicative of *sumbasileuo*). It is used only in this text and in I Corinthians 4:8. How can the believer's present endurance and future reign be simultaneous when enduring is in the present tense and reigning is in the future tense? We died with Christ in the past. We presently live with Him, and we shall reign with Him in the future.