

“To Him That Overcometh”

*“To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” Rev. 2:7. “...he that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death,” Rev. 2:11. “To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it,” Rev. 2:17. “And he that **overcometh** and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations,” Rev. 2:26. “He that **overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment: and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels,” Rev. 3:5. “Him that **overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the Name of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name,” Rev. 3:12. 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.*

In the preceding verses, each of which occurs consecutively in one of the letters to the seven churches of Asia (recorded in Revelation 2 and 3), a promise is given to the person who **overcomes**. Each of these letters has at least three things in common, such as: (1) Each letter is addressed “*to the angel (or messenger, bw) of the church,*” and then the specific local church is identified by name. (2) Each letter concludes with the admonition, “*he that hath an ear, let him hear with the Spirit saith unto the churches,*” (3) And in each letter a promise is given “*to him that **overcometh**.*”

“**Overcometh**” is from the Greek *NIKAO*, and it means to “be victorious.” The verbs “overcame,” “overcome,” or “overcometh” occur 13 times in the book of Revelation. In one instance (Rev. 11:7) it refers to those “**overcome**” by the beast “*that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.*” In another instance, concerning the beast “*out of the sea*” (the Roman Empire which became a great persecutor of the church), we are told that “*it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to **overcome** them...*” (Rev. 13:7) The context reveals that this was for a limited duration, that Rome would ultimately fall and the saints would prevail. Further, regarding the stated enemies of the church and their ultimate fate, we read these encouraging words: “*these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall **overcome** them....,*” Rev. 17:14. Hence, in these three references the verb “*overcome*” refers to what would be accomplished (either temporarily or permanently) by agents other than Christians. But it is of great significance that the other 10 occurrences of this word depict the saints and the blessings they receive when they **overcome**. God wants His people to overcome, to be victorious. He wants His people to know that they can be victorious, and He wants them to be aware of the blessings which await those who do **overcome**.

The book of Revelation, largely written in symbolic language, vividly depicts the ever present warfare between the forces of right versus wrong, of truth versus error, and of Christ versus Satan. Satan is our “*adversary*” (I Peter 5:8), and he is continually engaged in an all-out effort to “*overthrow*” our faith (2 Tim. 2:18), to confuse our minds

regarding divine truth (2 Cor. 4:4), and to “*devour*” us. However, the predominant message of Revelation is this: God’s people **can overcome**! Moreover, Revelation abounds with blessed promises offered the overcomer.

Every Christian has something to overcome. Satan will see to that! The saints at Ephesus, having left their “*first love*” (Rev. 2:4), had to overcome the loss of enthusiasm which characterizes such people. The members of the church at Smyrna had to **overcome** (to endure) life-threatening tribulation and persecution (Rev. 10). The saints at Pergamos had to **overcome** the influence of those who taught “*the doctrine of Balaam*” and “*the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” (Rev. 2:15). The point is this: In each situation the brethren had something different to overcome, but they each had **something** to overcome or to victoriously endure.

As it was then so it is now. A child of God must overcome something (frequently several things at once). It may be outside criticism or inside pride. It may be an evil temper, or nagging doubts. It may be pride from previous successes, or discouragements from previous failures. It may be family problems, financial adversities, or persecutions from others. It may be such a thing as a too-crowded schedule that interferes with private study, prayer, public worship, or personal evangelism. The list could go on. And on. The fact is this: all Christians must be overcomers! The Lord did not say the way would be easy. In fact, He said the opposite — that we must take up the “*cross, and follow*” Him, Matthew 16:24).

You say you often find it difficult to cope with your problems and remain faithful? Well cheer up! That means you are normal. If you did not encounter some difficulties along the way, you would probably develop too much attachment to this world, and have too little longing for heaven. The sweet singer of Israel got it right when he said, “*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes*” (Psalm 119:71). That which is unique about faithful Christians is not the absence of affliction, but the presence of commitment. They are winners because they are not quitters. They pray less often for the removal of the seeming Satanic obstacles, and more often for the faith and courage to overcome whatever obstacles which face them as they soberly make their uninterrupted journey from the cradle to the grave.

Dear reader, would you like to “*eat of the tree of life...in the midst of the paradise of God*” (Rev. 2:7)? Then look up, buckle up, straighten up, and get busy overcoming whatever obstacle which stands in the way of your being (and doing) all that God wants you to be and do.

—B.

Witherington

Sincerity Is All That Matters?

Imagine overhearing the following conversations.

Conductor: “I’m sorry, but you are on the wrong train. You want to go to Memphis, but this train does not go there. It goes to St. Louis.”

Passenger: “Don’t bother me with that stuff. I thought I was getting on the Memphis train, so what difference does it make? If a person thinks he is on the right train, that’s all that matters.”

Doctor: “Your husband is dead Ma’am. Those pills he took contained poison.”

Woman: (impatiently) “He can’t be dead! That’s impossible. He thought they were sleeping pills. No, he can’t be dead.”

Surgeon: Sir you have a malignant growth, which, unless it is removed, will cause your death.”

Patient: “Don’t be silly, Doc. Forget about it. I feel fine.”

Gospel Preacher: “Sir, the way you are living your life is filled with danger. I implore you to get into the right way before it is too late to become a Christian.”

Some People: “Don’t be so narrow. What difference does it make anyway? One way is just as good as another, and if a person thinks he is right, that is all that matters. I feel like I’m all right, so don’t bother me...I’m satisfied.”

—anonymous

“Test all things, hold fast what is good,” I Thess. 5:21.