

He That Overcometh

Let us read the message of the Lord to Sardis found in Revelation 3:1-6:

L"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

This message is most appropriate for us today. It is indeed a judgment-hour message to God's professed people wherever found, especially to us who are looking for the commencement of the judgment of the living; when in the awful presence of God our lives come up for review. We do not know how soon it will be. The servant of the Lord tells us that to us the warning belongs,

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." This is the warning, and then there is the promise in verse 5:

"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."

As the records are examined and each name appears in the investigative judgment, those who are unfaithful will have their names, with the record of their good deeds, blotted out of the book of life, the book of God's remembrance. Those who, by the blood of Christ and their confession of faith in Him on this earth, are accounted worthy for Christ and receive the promise,

"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." But there is another precious promise tucked away in this verse:

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;

"This is a reference to the judgment. The Lord promises that those who overcome will not have their names blotted out of the book of life, but that they shall be clothed in white raiment. In Great Controversy, in the chapter on the "Investigative Judgment," we read:

"The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth . . .

"While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, Satan accuses them before God as transgressors. . . .

"Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying,

"I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

And to the accuser of His people He declares, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness"--Great Controversy, pp. 483, 484.

The statement that "Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness" sounds very much like Revelation 3:5, doesn't it? Here the servant of the Lord is describing the judgment scene.

Satan is the prosecutor. He points to the record of sins, and Jesus points to the penitence of faith.

Standing in the presence of God for His people, Jesus rebukes the deceiver. He clothes His faithful ones with His own righteousness.

Another description of the judgment scene is found in the familiar passage in Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 472-475, concerning

Joshua and the angel in Zechariah 3: "This vision," she tells us, "applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement." As we all recognize, that is the great work of the investigative judgment. Now the climaxing paragraph on page 475 starts off with the sentence:

"As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart. . . ."

In ancient Israel, the people faced a work of judgment once a year. The high priest entered into the most holy place before the law of God, and the whole camp of Israel gathered around the sanctuary and afflicted their souls. First of all, in the daily service before the Day of Judgment, they confessed every known sin, sent them beforehand to the sanctuary, and having complied with the conditions of preparation for the judgment, the whole camp of Israel gathered around the sanctuary with deep repentance on the great Day of Atonement. This typified the work of the remnant church as we read in this passage from the fifth volume of Testimonies:

"As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments from them,' and the encouraging words are spoken, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment.' The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God

The despised Remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices."--Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 475.

This passage is but an explanation of Rev. 3:5: "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." To those who are faithful and comply with the conditions of the great Day of Atonement, the judgment message is good news. God gives us a precious promise, and has a precious work to accomplish for His people in the judgment. It is on this point that so many are stumbling today in the church of God. They do not believe that the High Priest in His work of judgment, in His work of final atonement, is going to accomplish a special work of grace in the lives of His people. In the great truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary which God has given to us, some see only that Christ is to cleanse the sanctuary in heaven.

But what does it say here? "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment."

The Lord is going to clothe us with His righteousness, the complete armor for eternity! We shall be clad in the armor of light and righteousness. Ellen G. White tells us in this passage that we are going to be clothed in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions that are in the world. We are to be made eternally secure from the tempter's devices.

That, my friends, is the promise of the judgment.

If anyone asks you if you believe anything is going to be done for God's people in the judgment, quote Revelation 3:5.

What does it mean to be clothed in white raiment? How is the Lord going to clothe His people with this righteousness whereby they are going to be eternally secure, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of this world? Let us notice a couple of texts from the Word of God:

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it."--Isa. 45:8.

The gospel prophet here says: "Let the sky pour down righteousness." God is represented as opening the windows of heaven, and, as the Septuagint version says here, "Let the heavens rain righteousness." God will open the windows of heaven and clothe His people with righteousness by raining it upon them.

When the Hebrew prophets spoke of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they usually used the figure of rain. There is a similar text in Hosea:

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."--Hosea 10:12.

There is only one means whereby God can give any spiritual gift to His people, and that is through the Holy Spirit.

"This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train."--Desire of Ages, p. 672. "Let the skies open," the Scripture says, "and pour down righteousness."

"Break up your fallow ground," and the Lord will come and rain righteousness upon you. The Scripture is speaking of the outpouring of the latter rain and the Spirit of God. Let us come back to Revelation 3:5, and link the facts together.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." Put this with the fact that the Lord clothes His people with righteousness, and what does it mean? "He that overcometh, upon him shall I rain righteousness. I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on him the fullness of the blessing of My Spirit that he may be clothed in armor from his head to his feet, that he may have the full, imparted life of Christ, and may be eternally secure from the assaults of Satan."

The promise of the judgment in Revelation 3:5 means: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed with the mighty power of the outpouring of the latter rain." Then what is the blessing of the judgment? What is the blessing of the final atonement of Jesus as He ministers for His people in the most holy place? The latter rain. The crowning act of redeeming grace. That is the blessing which is held out to every soul.

On this great day of judgment, as Jesus our High Priest is before the ark making final intercession for us, while the angels hold the four winds of strife that they might not blow upon the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their forehead, while God calls His people to the sanctuary to receive the greatest blessing of the ages, while He sends forth the message,

"All things are now ready, come to the marriage,"—this is the reality of the cleansing of the sanctuary. This is the gift of God's latter rain, whereby God's people are going to be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, not just provisionally as in the case of conversion, but for eternity.

Yet, let us not mistake the conditions upon which this great promise will be realized. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." Summarized in this text we find the whole experience of the sanctuary. "He that overcometh" is the daily experience in preparation for the judgment, in preparation for the latter rain, typified in that daily experience of the earthly sanctuary, when the sinner came and confessed his sin at the altar, and went out to live a new life.

The priest ministered for him in that first apartment of the sanctuary before the table of shewbread, the lamps of fire, and the altar of incense, bringing to him every spiritual grace that he might be victorious in the conquest of sin. "He that overcometh"—that is the daily experience. This is not a future work; it is a present work.

Then, when we have laid hold of the grace of Christ to become overcomers, the promise is given, "I will rain righteousness upon him." The Lord will send the gift of the perfecting latter rain to finish the work, not just in the world, but our hearts in first. He will finish the work and cut it short

in righteousness. Perfection is an infinite standard. It does not matter how high the standard is, however, for what God commands, He also promises. The higher the standard, the more we can rejoice. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." That is the promise of the judgment: the perfecting latter rain upon God's people.

Let us consider the conditions whereby we shall be clothed for eternity with the baptism of God's Spirit. "To him that overcometh," seven times mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. To the Christian this is perhaps the most beautiful word in the whole English language. An overcomer! It has a very rich connotation. Here is the Christian warfare. How are we to overcome that we might be partakers of the great promise Christ has for us in the judgment? Let us notice Revelation 3:21:

"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."

The Lord does not stand off and tell us to do something which He has not done Himself. Here is the secret of overcoming. Here is another promise to the overcomer: he will be a conqueror. There is no greater conqueror than an overcomer; for, having ruled over sin and his own spirit here in one of the greatest battles that can ever be fought--the battle with self--he will sit with Christ on the throne of the universe. He will have precious fellowship with his Lord, not only in this life but through the ages of eternity.

A tremendous promise is held out to us--fellowship with Christ, with the Godhead, that even the angels cannot know. "To him that overcometh . . . even as I also overcame." How did the Lord overcome? As we look to Christ and see the great work of salvation which was accomplished through His incarnation, life, and death, we may find the victory for overcoming. This is a precious text, for it tells us that Christ had to overcome.

Some would have us believe that somehow, when Jesus came to this world He was so different from humanity because He took the nature of man as it was before the fall, He had nothing to overcome. But this is not the Christ of the Bible, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was made partaker of flesh and blood, who took upon His divine nature our fallen nature, who came to share our heredity, who came after the race had deteriorated in the 4,000 years since Eden, and who took upon Himself the infirmities of degenerate humanity. The book *Desire of Ages* tells us that Jesus knew by experience what are our wants, and what is the strength of our temptations, because He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin; and He overcame and therefore condemned sin in the flesh.

We are exhorted to overcome as Jesus overcame. How did Jesus overcome? Christ says of His experience in this life, "I can of Mine own self do nothing. The Father which dwelleth within Me, He doeth the works." Jesus was without a taint of sin. He said, "The prince of

this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." There was nothing in Jesus which responded to temptation.

He was a complete overcomer. But in overcoming, Jesus did not command any power we may not command through faith in Him. When Jesus was to be born, the angel announced to Mary, "That

holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."--Luke 1:35. Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost. And the Spirit of God kept Him from sin. Jesus' overcoming was that of a true human being.

We are told in the Desire of Ages that Jesus went out to a solitary place to pray, and the dew of night often rested upon His beard. There He was a suppliant, and He supplicated the throne of grace until His humanity was charged with a divine current. Then He went forth to minister to the world. As a man, by faith--the same as we are to employ in overcoming--He laid hold of the throne of God with a faith that would not let go. He was born of the Holy Ghost.

He was led by the Spirit. He worked miracles by the Spirit. Christ overcame by the power of the Spirit of God, and was completely victorious in the conquest over evil. Jesus expects every true Christian who takes His name to be a conqueror, for all power in heaven and earth is given into His hands that we might be more than conquerors, not just conquerors.

When the Scripture speaks about entering into the kingdom of God, it is not just an entrance into the kingdom. The Lord does not want us to get into the kingdom just by the skin of our teeth. Peter says, "that ye might have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ Jesus our Lord." (See 2 Peter 1:10-11). Sister White says the saints are going to march into the city of God as if they belonged there. An abundant entrance--to be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Now where is the secret? The Lord is trying to point out to us the very basis of our sin problem. We are born with a nature which has a bent to evil. Let us take the problem of temper. This nature of mine is so disposed that when it exercises itself under unfavorable circumstances, it can react in no other way than to lose its temper. I can agonize as much as I like, and pray that the Lord will help me to keep my temper, but He cannot help me. He is not going to give this evil nature of mine any grace to keep its temper, because the old nature is so desperately wicked that it is past all cure. It is a corrupt tree, and cannot bring out good fruit. ". . . It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." --Romans 8:7.

Sometimes we struggle to get victory over certain sins, but the Lord does not give us the victory because He wants us to look deeper and see that He is concerned with more than

the sins which appear on the surface of our lives; He is trying to show us that the cause is the sinful nature.

That is why Sister White says, "All the agonizing, all the tears and struggles, will not bring them the blessing they long for. Self must be entirely surrendered."--Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 165.

Another statement from the Signs of the Times says, "Self, the old disobedient nature, must be crucified and Christ must take up His abode in the heart." "The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and the end thereof is death."--Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 267.

Here is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which presents the cross. It is the one thing which distinguishes it from every false religion in this earth, whether it calls itself Christianity or not. Everything else, my friends, is nothing better than a program of self-improvement. Trying to dress the old man up to make him better natured, trying to reform him, trying to put a religious garb over him, trying to take this sin and that sin and the other sin away from him is valueless. You can try to sanctify him for ninety years, and at the end of the ninety years he will be more corrupt than he was at the beginning, because he has had ninety years of learning how to deceive, and to evade the obligations of the cross of Christ.

This fact, so simple, is hard for us to grasp. Unless a man becomes as a little child, he shall not see the kingdom of God. This is our problem, not our sins. If we think that temper is our problem, or impatience is, or appetite, etc., we are deceived, because it goes deeper than that.

It is the "I"; it is "you" that is the problem. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and its tendency is to moral corruption and death. Now, how are we to become overcomers?

Overcoming in the Christian pathway starts off in the very way humanity will not look--at the foot of the cross. When we think of overcoming, we think of gritting our teeth, making our resolution, and being full of determination to overcome if it is the last thing we do. It certainly is the last thing that we shall do! The Lord starts by death. He says, "Put away that old life, take away that old garment.

What are you trying to reform that old life for? You cannot make it better natured. Are you trying to get good fruit out of that old tree?"

It is true that through education and culture we can stop smoking, we can stop bad language, and perhaps most of the day (at least when our friends are about us) we can put on respectable behavior; but the old threads of selfishness reappear when the strain is really on. This is the religion of self, and God cannot accept it. It is going to be a sad day in the judgment when the Lord has to say to many of His professed people, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

On the other hand, in the robe of Jesus' righteousness which He offers us, and means for us to be clothed in from day to day, there is not one thread of human devising. Not one thread of it! The garment is woven in the loom of heaven. The Lord says, "If you will come here to this sanctuary, realizing that the old nature of yours can never produce anything good; and what is more, that I will not make it produce anything good because that is not My plan for it; so, counting it all lost for Me, I will replace it by giving you a new heart." Count your lives lost for Christ. The apostle Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ." Then the Lord promises, "I will take away that stony heart out of your flesh. I will take away that old nature."

The Lord gives the promise to every one who will die at the foot of the cross, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. I will give you an heart of flesh." (See Ezekiel 36:26).

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

--2 Peter 1:4

(emphasis ours).

The Lord designs to impart to humanity a new, heaven-born principle, even the heaven-born principle of love, to take possession of the heart. Its fruit is unto righteousness, unto holiness.

This is the way Christ was an overcomer. This is why Jesus had no propensity to sin. This is why Jesus had no desire to Lose His temper. He was a partaker of the divine nature. Day by day He received a fresh baptism of the Spirit of God.

Friends, that victory is for us. Jesus is now ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, and He has an infinite fund of power. The some Spirit which dwelt in Him on earth He is longing with infinite love to impart to us.

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory," says the apostle Paul. We are to fight the good fight of faith, a faith that lays hold of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and appropriates it to ourselves.

"To him that overcometh." Yes, there is a work for us to do. But all the grace and power that Christ has available, and which He is longing to impart to us, to make us victorious over every hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil, is not a substitute for putting our wills on the side of right.

He has never given us a substitute for diligence or earnestness: The word "overcomer" has the concept that we are to co-operate with the agency which heaven has provided us by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. Only those who are overcomers every day, having the victory over every known sin, will receive the promise of the judgment, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." Only he who is an overcomer will be a partaker of the blessing of God in the outpouring of the latter rain. As we are told, those who share the refreshing must obtain the victory over every sin--over pride, selfishness, love of the world, over every wrong word and action.

What are you doing, friends, in the great work of preparation? We should be purifying our souls by obedience to the truth. Mrs. White says that those who overcome on every point and stand the test, be the price what it may, having heeded the counsel of the True Witness, will receive the latter rain and be prepared for translation. Yes, the latter rain is to accomplish a glorious work for God's people.

The latter rain is going to clothe us forever with the righteousness of Jesus. It is to seal us for eternity. It is to make us impregnable to the assaults of Satan and the principles of his kingdom

throughout the ages of eternity. The latter rain will bring us to perfection. But let us never lose sight of the fact that first of all comes the condition: "To him that overcometh."

- **"The Christian life is a warfare."**

The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares,

- **'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.'**

Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan's enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties, and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the powers of darkness.

- **"There must be a revival of the strait testimony."**

The path to Heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed, if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom, and to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?"--Testimonies, vol. 5, p.222 .

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