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So Pharaoh is left with the cold comfort (v. 31) that as is the doom of all nations that forget God—for Ezekiel's hearers there was the further message, clear even if unexpressed that as Egypt had gone, so would Babylon go in the day of God's choice. It is hard to imagine a more dramatic close to Ezekiel's prophecies against the nations. He now turns to the future of Israel; the destruction of Jerusalem can be followed by national resurrection, but there is no future for the nations of the world as they go down into silence.

WHO ARE THE OVERCOMERS?*

(Revelation 2 and 3)

W. HOSTE, B.A.

Who then are the overcomers? I think they are those in each church who prove themselves real Christians by continuing to the end, and that for four reasons: (1) The character of the promises; (2) the distinction between the promises and 'crowns' mentioned to two of the churches; (3) the solemn contrast in chap. 20: 7, 8, between 'overcoming' and being finally lost; and (4) the conditions for 'overcoming' laid down in other Scriptures.

1. *If the promises to Overcomers are to extraordinary Christians alone, what is left for the ordinary?*

There are fourteen promises in the seven messages, and all, I believe, can be shewn to be parts of the great salvation which God has by grace provided for His redeemed, and which legalism, if it cannot deny, seeks to minimize, but which, though 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard', nor mind conceived, yet 'God hath prepared for them that love Him'.

It may be difficult to believe that all these promises are for *all* the people of God, but even if only one could be *proved* to be the common property of all believers, that alone would prove my thesis.

The promises of Philadelphia are peculiarly rich, and it will be questioned by some whether all Christians could hope to be

* Concluded from last issue.

'pillars in the temple of my God'. Surely, they will say, this could only be for some specially distinguished ones. This might have weight if 'pillar' in the Scriptures usually meant the support of a fabric, instead of a trophy or witness, like Jacob's four pillars, or the brazen pillars, Boaz and Jachin, which supported nothing, but bore perpetual witness to the power and faithfulness of Jehovah.

In this sense all the people of God will be 'pillars' in His temple, perpetual witnesses to what grace can do. This is strengthened by the next words, 'shall go no more out'. Certainly no child of God will lose heaven when once admitted. The overcomer will also be inscribed with the name of God to whom he belongs, of the city to which he belongs, and of the Saviour who bought him, and why this should not be true of all 'fellow-citizens of the saints' is not clear. The promise to the overcomers at Laodicea denotes sharing the throne of Christ, after the conflict and may be taken with the promise to Thyatira. All believers are made kings unto God (Rev. 1:6) and will reign with Christ (chapter 20:6). Paul in 1 Cor. 4:8, shews, I think, that all Christians will share in Christ's reign, for while he blames the carnal Corinthians for antedating the hour, he raises no question that they will reign at the proper moment, and He with them. They will *know Christ, too, as the 'Morning Star'*, when all sleeping and living saints will be caught up (1 Thess. 4).

The promise to the Overcomers at Sardis are threefold, (1) to be clothed in white robes, as all will, who 'wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb'; (2) the second every Christian can likewise claim; 'not to be blotted out of the book of life'—(the church-registers at Sardis had been badly kept, and names might need to be erased therein, but God's book knows no erasures*), and (3) to have their names confessed before the Father†.

* See Rev. 22:19, where 'book of life' is rightly changed in R.V. into 'tree of life'.

† I do not think Luke 12:9, 10, runs counter to this, where confession of Christ is regarded as the characteristic of the believer, and denial of Him that of the ungodly.

The message to Sardis has been made to prove that Overcomers are some particular type of Christian, but this is, I believe a mistake. There were some in Sardis, who were clearly living as 'Overcomers' (though the word is not applied to them), others professedly believers, who were in a dead state; these are exhorted to repent that they may prove that they really had life and so turn out to be Overcomers. It is perfectly clear that then, as now, it is not church position which guarantees reality but Christ possession.

To Pergamos is promised 'the hidden manna'—Christ, as the satisfying portion of the redeemed, and that, by analogy from the literal manna which was *for all Israel*. The white stone is more difficult; it probably means a token of confidence and recognition—and what joy for the recipients to find engraved thereon a hidden name, given them by Christ and only known to Him and them. This is the private acknowledgement of Christ, in contrast with the public confession of Rev. 3:5. None but the ungodly and false professors will ever hear those terrible words, 'I never knew you'.

As for Ephesus, the promise to the Overcomer is to eat of the 'tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God'. The 'Tree of life' in Eden, though Adam and Eve were shut out from it in mercy after the fall, originally they might freely eat of it. A better Tree—Christ Himself—will be restored to the redeemed in the heavenly Paradise. It will spring from the River of Life and its fruit will be available for all who 'wash their robes' (Rev. 2:14). Shut out from it will be the ungodly (verse 5). As the 'hidden manna' represents the private fellowship of believers with Christ, so this their public and collective.

In the case of Smyrna, the Overcomers may have to pass through physical death, they will 'not be hurt of the second death'. This last is explained in chapter 20, as 'the lake of fire'. The believer 'hath everlasting life' and 'will never see death'; so this promise includes all such. These promises then describe heavenly privileges, and if these are allocated to some special 'circle', what remains for ordinary Christians?

But if the Overcomers are those who prove themselves real Christians, what of those who do not overcome? Nothing is said of such. Are then all in the churches, Overcomers? I fear that

would be too much to say. We are obliged to face the fact that it is possible outwardly to form part of even a Scripturally ordered assembly, and never to have been born again.

To understand this we must notice the different ways in which the churches are viewed in Rev. 1, and in the two following chapters.

In chapter 1, they are regarded in their heavenly character, (1) as all the recipients from the Triune God of a message of grace and peace, (verses 4, 5); (2) as all the objects of the love of Christ, 'To Him Who loveth us' (verse 5, R.V.); (3) as all beneficiaries of the blood of Christ, 'Who washed (or loosed) us from our sins in His own blood' (verse 5); (4) as having been all constituted kings (uncrowned as yet) (verse 6); (5) and all consecrated priests unto God (verse 6); (6) as being all lampstands (verse 12), that is, true witness for God, and (7) all golden, that is, all—even Thyatira and Laodicea—a Divine work without alloy. Nothing can modify this relationship or condition. But in chapters 2 and 3, the atmosphere is different, the word 'grace' does not occur. The churches are no longer viewed in their 'golden' character, but rather in their mixed condition, as partly the work of man; and so, failure has come in. Here, alas, we find in some cases 'bricks for stone, and slime for mortar'. Principles of looseness and disintegration are openly practised and advocated. There has been carelessness in reception, 'no questions asked;' and slackness in discipline—no putting away for false doctrine. In fact the very principles of Babylon, which have made Christendom what it is, are connived at and false teachers allowed. In this connection it is to be noted how individual the messages are. Each church is addressed in the person of its 'angel', in the second person singular, 'thou,' 'thee,' and it is 'he that hath an ear', who is 'to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches', and the promises are 'to *him* that overcometh'. In fact across these chapters might be written the searching words, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His' and, 'Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity'.

It is clear, in reading the messages of the Lord, that He recognizes this mixed element, and calls upon each individual to prove his reality by obedience and holiness.

2. This conclusion is justified by considering the antithesis in Rev. 21:7, 8, where the 'overcomer' clearly includes all the true people of God, 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things,' and that in contrast, not with failing Christians, but with a terrible list of the openly ungodly, characteristically overcome by sin, 'the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable', etc.

3. There are crowns spoken of in these passages; they are the rewards for special faithfulness. That is why they are only mentioned to the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia. The other five were to be blamed, and had to prove their reality, and to the two 'overcoming' churches was promised a crown as well (see Rev. 2:10; 3:11.)

It has been said of old England, and with a measure of truth, when you come to think of it, that in her numerous wars, great and small, she has not won many battles, but has always managed somehow, by God's overruling providence, to win the last one; and His promises encourage us to believe that every true Christian, though he does not win as many battles as he might and should, will win the last battle in the great war against sin, Satan and the world, and this—

(a) Because of his relation to the Father.

'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world' (1 John 5:4). Life is often compared to a swift river. Now the surface of a great river is interesting, with its steamers and sailing craft and rowing boats; but the life below the surface is still more so, with its finny tribes, and shell-fish of various kinds, differing so widely in habit and appearance, but all having one thing in common, the *power to hold their own against the current*. This power varies in degree. Some, like the salmon, can even leap the weirs; others, though unable to do this, can easily overcome the strongest current; others hug the banks; they love the backwaters and shallows. The shell-fish just stick on, content with little excursions now and again along the bottom, while the oysters, mussels and such like anchor themselves to the rocks, and never move at all.

The dead things—logs, derelicts, rubbish—float down stream and are swept out to sea, but not one living thing is swept away.

It is the same in the stream of life. There are Pauls, Luthers, Wesleys, etc., men of exceptional powers and faith who 'leap the weirs'; others, more numerous but of less energy, are nevertheless strong, go-ahead Christians; some merely hug the shore; others, again, can do little but just 'stick on', but though they do not make much progress, 'they continue unto this day', and equally with their stronger brethren, are not swept away: 'they overcome the world', *because they possess Divine life.*

(b) Because of the indwelling of the Spirit.

'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). Here it is a question of overcoming the Modernist spirit, called in this Epistle 'the spirit of antichrist', which 'does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh'. The secret of victory is that the Spirit is greater than Satan. To possess the Spirit is the enduring privilege of every Christian, 'in whom having believed ye were sealed', 'unto the day of redemption', etc. What was it that saved Lucknow in the Mutiny? Not numbers, for the odds were fearful, but the presence of such men as Lawrence, Inglis, Havelock and Outram. So in the greater conflict, human strength cannot avail, but the might of the indwelling Spirit.

(c) Because of the love of Christ.

'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us' (Rom. 8:37). A good deal of surmise has been expended as to the meaning of 'more than conquerors'. Really the word is one in the Greek, as we say 'super-conquerors'. It is not by virtue of our strength or skill, but through the 'Lover of our souls' delivering us, that thus, we become 'super-conquerors'.

But to revert, in closing, to our river. The fish do not stem the current merely because they are alive, but they have tails, and fins, and suction power, and they show they are alive by using them. So the Christian does not overcome automatically, he has his part to do: for one thing he must use his faith. 'This is the victory that overcome the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcome the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the

Son of God?' (1 John 5:4, 5). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, etc. But we must put the armour on, and we must use it too. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony'. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints'. Alas! how many have been overcome like Peter, through sleeping when they ought to have been watching and praying!

'Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen*'.

BIBLICAL HEBREW WORDS

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Man in Society (*cont.*)

Slaves

Apart from the cases just discussed where *na'ar* means a slave the regular word is *'ebed*. This has no feminine and doubtless in many cases includes female slaves. Where a feminine is needed, either *'amah* (root-meaning uncertain) or *shipchah* (related to the Phoenician for family) is used. They are used apparently interchangeably in Biblical Hebrew and are translated handmaid and maid-servant indifferently; in fact they mean female slave.

Though the English versions show little variation in the rendering of *'ebed*—in the AV servant 716 times, bondman 20 times, man-servant 23 times, bondage 10 times—and its root meaning, to work or labour, is clear, yet its translation presents major and probably insoluble difficulties.

The *'ebed* is the man who works because he has to, not because he wants to, i.e., a slave, whether a prisoner of war, bought with money, or born in his owner's house (Gen. 17:12). It is a