

Heavenly Promises to Overcomers

By Jay Wegter

Christ has purchased victory over our enemies (*world, flesh, devil, sin, death, and hell*) in order to give that victory to the church. It is our daily responsibility to appropriate the victory which Christ has won for us. As we appropriate that victory by faith and obedience; we overcome. First and foremost, we overcome by faith in Christ (1 Jn 5:4). But it is a faith that obeys, that denies self, and that strives according to His mighty power (Col 1:28-29). The overcomer's active faith allows him to set his affections on things above and thereby to 'see' the true wealth of his Kingdom treasure. The overcomer exercises a vigorous faith which sees the infinite worth of its object (Christ and glory) and as a result, he is willing to forsake this present world for an incomparable weight of glory (2 Cor 4:16-18).

When Christ spoke from glory in His revelation to the churches (the book of Revelation), He gave the church a series of powerful incentives to overcome. We have designated these incentives provided by our Lord as, "Heavenly promises to overcomers." They are as follows:

Overcomers will eat of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7). Our "Probationer's"* perfect obedience on our behalf entitles us to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Because of Christ's work for us, God gives His redeemed people the right to eat of this tree just as if we had supplied perfect obedience. Partaking of this fruit from the tree of life is the formal celebration of our reception of eternal life in order to live with God in paradise forever. (* Christ is our "Probationer" in the sense that He passed every test all without sin and did so as our representative. Adam as our probationer failed to do so.)

Overcomers shall not be hurt by the second death (Rev 2:11). Faith in Christ as our Substitute animates all of our labors as overcomers. In these first two promises we see His active and passive obedience (active in His perfect obedience to all the Father's will, passive in His willingness to lay down His life on our behalf as our suffering Substitute). The second death cannot hurt us because our Substitute bore the penalty of hell for us.

Overcomers will be given some of the hidden manna (Rev 2:17). The 'manna' is a metaphor for an uninterrupted feast of the soul (Ps 36:8). Those who feed upon Christ now shall never experience deprivation then. In cherishing this promise, the overcomer is willing to strive, endure, and persevere for a goal of such infinite worth. The overcomer sees this as a most high privilege to sit down at His Master's table and dine with Him in close communion. Our bliss in heaven will be the uninterrupted communication of God to us through Christ.

Overcomers will receive a white stone and new name (Rev 2:17). The overcomer sees his life under the gaze of Christ—lived out in the presence of God (Gen 17:1). We live for His approval, seeking to please the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:25). The white stone is given at the finish of our race. We run with our eyes upon the goal (Heb 12:1-3ff.). The white stone is given in a formal ceremony which gives praise to God for clearing us from all guilt. The new name encapsulates a unique 'personalized' identity given to each overcomer as Christ's warrior. It brings into focus the significance of all our trials, tests, and afflictions and reveals how they have prepared us, proved us, and

sanctified us. Our spiritual battles have had a key part in conforming us to Christ and in fitting us for our heavenly tasks, privileges, and responsibilities. The white stone is also associated with the heavenly manna. Our white stone is like a pass or invitation which grants us admission to enjoy supper and fellowship with Christ at any time we wish.

Overcomers are granted authority over the nations (Rev 2:26). The overcomer is one who through Christ has come off a champion and conqueror over the world (Rom 8:37-39). The saint has fought the good fight and has by Christ's blood overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has stood against the enemies of his soul and has defended God's truth and exposed sin and error. He has wielded the sword of truth and has worn the armor and served as a soldier of Jesus Christ. What of those who do not overcome? It is inconceivable that God should place over the nations professors of Christ who did not live a life of true repentance, and who did not overcome the world. Those who conquer and triumph through Christ in this age will be examples of victory to the nations in the next age. Their lives will be at testimony to their posts in the Messianic Age to come. And then authority will be rightfully given them, for they have lived as ambassadors of holiness amidst an evil and perverse generation (Phil 2:12-16).

Overcomers shall be given white garments, their names shall remain in the book of life and the Lord Jesus Christ shall confess their names before His Father and His angels (Rev 3:5). The overcomer lives a life of mortifying sin; he is striving for holiness. For the present he does battle, at times agonizing over, what remains of indwelling sin (Col 3:1-5ff.). Therefore, the promise of partaking in Christ's moral perfection is wealth untold to the one who daily battles sin. Spotless white is a goal and privilege above all else. Since the overcomer is zealous to follow the Lamb, he anticipates with eagerness the privilege of being publically owned by the Lamb before God the Father and the holy angels. There is no greater contrast in time or eternity than to be owned publically or disowned publically by the Lord of all before God and angels. The overcomer seeks to walk in such a way that His Lord will own him as His holy child who has lived for Christ, borne his cross, and confessed His name before men (Mt 10:32-33).

Overcomers will become pillars in God's temple and permanent residents with God's Name upon them (Rev 3:12). This reward to overcomers corresponds to all our longings for a true home—all that a true home entails: true community, true security, true belonging, true significance, true love, and warmth will be the overcomer's inheritance. This world is filled with false refuges, with temporary dwellings. The overcomer's heart is set upon things above, upon his eternal home. Therefore, he does not insist upon a heaven down here nor permanence in a temporal world. He knows the tendency of those things to distract his heart from his true home and to impede his course as an overcomer. The strength of the promise of a perfect home puts resolve into him to endure, persevere, and show all diligence (Heb 6:11-12). During his present time here, he regards himself as that of a pilgrim and wanderer, as an alien and stranger with heavenly citizenship (1 Pet 1:1-2; Phil 3:17-21). Those whose labors are aimed at making themselves comfortable and content here will not overcome. By contrast, the overcomer is controlled by the love of Christ and by affection for things above (Col 3:1-4).

Overcomers will sit down with Christ upon His throne just as He overcame and sat down upon His Father's throne (Rev 3:21). This brief life with its tests, trials, and tribulations is but a training course for the saint. The overcomer sees himself as a priest and king in training (Rev 1:5-6). Christ is the

pattern, Christ is the goal—the ‘finish line’. He overcame and sat down on the Father’s throne. Shall we expect to sit with Him on His throne without overcoming? Heavenly thrones are for overcomers only. It is the overcomers who reign with Christ. Christ’s bond slaves have their Master’s commands in their hearts and minds. His words form our peace, our rule, our marching orders, and our victory. We march under His banner and orders; we follow the Son of God in His footsteps (His pattern of life included rejections, suffering, slaying, rising, newness of life—Luke 9:21-26). The fellowship of His suffering is the experience of the overcomers (Phil 3:10; Col 1:24). We pursue the course He has laid out for us. At the moment of the new birth we were anointed sons and soldiers. Now in the Christian life we wage war and ultimately overcome by the blood of the Lamb, then we are crowned in glory (1 Pet 1:3-9). The Son of God was first anointed, then bore His cross, then was crowned and took His throne.

Overcomers will live in the splendor of the New Jerusalem. They will dwell with God as sons of God—as part of His ‘forever family’. They will be personally comforted by God. They will no longer experience death, mourning, crying, or pain. They will belong to God and God will belong to them (Rev 21:1-7). How marvelous it is that early in Scripture God gives us an insight into His plan to ultimately dwell with us His redeemed creatures. “Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lev 26:11-12). This promise given to Israel at Mt. Sinai in the giving of the Law was a powerful harbinger of what heaven would be.

But, the Jewish nation was not willing to consistently obey the words of the covenant written on tablets of stone. It says in Scripture that God was angry with them. “Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways’; as I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (Heb 3:8-11).

But God does not leave the story to terminate there, for the apostle Paul tells us that what the Law could not do, “. . . weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:3-5).

The Overcomer: *Personal assignment; develop the resolve to be an overcomer*

APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE:

Scripture applied involves making a penetrating application of God’s Word to oneself. It involves a commitment to repent. It is nothing short of being a doer of the Word. When applied to one’s life, Scripture produces change, transformation and renewal. Through the application of Scripture, the believer is conformed to the will of God. Application of the Word also involves a ruthless realism. One must literally “preach” the passage to oneself. That practice includes building a case or argument for personal obedience. When studying to apply the Word, one must uncover and review the benefits of obedience. Application also involves identifying and personalizing the dangers of disobedience.

Compose questions that will assist in the application process.

Why is there a sense of urgency joined to the burden of the text? (Or why is immediate obedience incumbent upon the believer?). What strategies can be developed to deal effectively with excuses for disobedience? Regarding the command, do I have attitudes of procrastination or apathy? Where are my affections “worshipping” the creation instead of God? What ruling lusts in my heart manifest the love of the world? How do these ruling lusts block my worship and enjoyment of God?

Resolve to meditate upon the passage and to glorify God by your obedience. Holy affections can only be maintained by feeding upon the promises of God. So truant is the soul of man, that only by daily gathering of the manna of God’s Word can the love of the world be displaced by love for God.

Study the profile of the overcomer from the book of Revelation

- 1.) Use a concordance, locate and study every occurrence of the word *overcome* and *overcame* in the book of Revelation. Familiarize yourself with the near context surrounding each use of the word.
- 2.) What is it that the overcomer must overcome? (Support your answer with Scripture).
- 3.) By what means does the overcomer overcome? (Note: Revelation 12:11 and 1 John 5:4-5). Is exertion involved in overcoming? Explain your answer. *Personal Application* –Does a consistent use of the means of overcoming describe your life? Where is repentance needed immediately?
- 4.) What connection is there between the overcomer’s success and his fixing his hope and goal upon the things above (the heavenly promises) (Col 3:1-4)? *Personal Application* – To what degree do the heavenly promises to overcomers thrill your soul? Describe how little or how much the promises energize your pursuit of sanctification and perseverance. To what degree are the promises providing incentive for your conquest of sin and worldly lusts?
- 5.) If you answered that these promises have little effect upon you, what ought you to do by way of repentance?
- 6.) Do you believe that the overcomer in Revelation is another way of describing a disciple of Christ? (Support your answer). Is it possible to be a true believer but not an overcomer? Have you been involved in self- confrontation from Scripture in order to correct by repentance all that keeps you from overcoming? What would move you from laxness to fervency in your attitude toward overcoming?

Come to terms with the necessity of overcoming in order to gain heaven

- 1.) Do you believe that you can go to heaven without being an overcomer? (Support your answer from Scripture).
- 2.) Find one or more passages of Scripture that teaches or infers that Christ purchased sanctification and/or perseverance for His elect. Does Scripture teach that the warranty or proof of one’s election is his serious pursuit of sanctification? (see 2 Peter 1:10) If you answered “yes” explain why those who lack a serious pursuit of sanctification may possess a false assurance of salvation. Apply this paragraph to yourself in a few written sentences.
- 3.) Prove or disprove from Scripture that the Christian is a person who does not fail to participate in and appropriate Christ’s victory over sin and the world.

The Heart of the Overcomer

- 1.) Examine every promise in the book of Revelation that is made to overcomers. Are there connections between overcoming and the enjoyment of heaven? If so, describe these connections. Are you able to personalize them? If so, commit them to writing.
- 2.) Locate the passages in the book of Revelation on overcoming that entail suffering and persecution. Notice that severe affliction always exposes true affections and loyalties. Explain how the mindset of an overcomer is indispensable preparation for suffering and persecution. If a person is not engaged in personal discipline for the sake of godliness are they adequately prepared for experiences of suffering and persecution? What loyalties and affections would be revealed if you were to experience severe suffering or persecution?
- 3.) Prove that the overcomer has fixed his affections upon the promises of God. Note that the overcomer sets his affections upon things above. He daily turns from the love of the world in ongoing repentance. Locate areas in which you are double-minded. *Personal Application* - If your affections are untouched by the biblical promises to overcomers, what does it say about your spiritual condition? What would repentance look like in your case? Is it possible to love God without being moved by the promises to overcomers? Why or Why not? Why is love toward God absolutely antithetical to the love of the world? (See 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4 ff.). Is it possible to delight in God without a heart of loyalty and adoration—a heart united in commitment to Him?

CONCLUSION

Keeping one's eyes upon Christ is necessary in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the lofty standards Christianity requires (Heb 12:1-3ff.). Christ is the believer's righteousness. Right-standing before God, freely given by God's grace is the necessary in order to pursue sanctification with right motives. Without the foundation of justification by grace in Christ, the believer will be vulnerable to pitfalls such as pride, despair, despondency and perfectionism (Rom 3:23-26).

Overcoming is an essential aspect of sanctification. Overcoming requires self-denial, it requires mortification of sin, and it requires pro-active obedience. The discouraged believer may be tempted to drop out of the battle when he views the vast amount of territory that is yet to be claimed for righteousness in his own life. Seek the Lord's strength and wisdom in prayer. Begin making changes in the areas of your life that the Lord has brought conviction by His Word. Change occurs through small steps of faithfulness. Make new paths for your feet that in time will reshape character.