

Overcoming The Wicked One

By Jessie Penn Lewis

Union with Christ in His death and resurrection is the normal life of the child of God. The Scriptural way to deal with sin is not to 'get victory over it' but 'to die to it!' You must reckon yourself dead to sin day-by-day, hour-by-hour, moment by moment, in order to be in a position to overcome the world and to overcome Satan. That should be the normal position of the man "in Christ".

If you are to be in perpetual conflict over your own temper, spending the whole of your Christian life revolving around yourself, trying to overcome something that you call sin, and which probably is sin, you are not in a fit condition to overcome the world and Satan. You must get into the way of victory over Satan by way of Romans six.

Your death with Christ: Never confuse sin with Satan. A temptation to sin may be from Satan, or from ceasing to maintain your attitude of 'death' to sin and the self-life. It is true that Satan works through the 'old creation', but by reckoning yourself dead to it, you nullify the ground upon which he works. It is dangerous to put down to Satan what is the working of the old Adam nature. It is equally fatal to a life of real triumph if you reverse it, and put down to yourself what is really the working of Satan, and thus bring yourself under condemnation. Hence the need of a continual reckoning on your death with Christ. It will not do to take for granted that you are on that footing, it needs to be constantly maintained and re-affirmed.

So it is very striking to find that when John writes about 'overcoming', he does not say anything about overcoming sin. He speaks of overcoming the world, and of overcoming the Wicked One. And remember, he is writing to the man who knows God and knows how to walk 'after the spirit', when he says "whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5 v4). He that is 'born of God' is a 'partaker of the divine nature', God's life is in him, and overcomes the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The power to overcome the world comes through being born of God. The means of overcoming the world is faith. We triumph entirely by faith. The object of faith is Jehovah-Jesus, Jesus the Son of God. HE is the Conqueror. Have faith in the Conqueror, for all who have such faith conquer and overcome.

Two forms of Overcoming. What have we to overcome?

1) We have to overcome **the world-spirit**, and all the things in the world that are contrary to God, and we do it through the new life that we have from God.

Then (2) we have to overcome **the Wicked One and his hosts** "Beloved, believe not every spirit!" Why not? Because "many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God ... Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is HE that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4 v1-4). A person, "he that is in the world", Satan the prince of this world, is to be overcome, and the power that overcomes him is a Person, "HE that is in you", the Spirit of God.

So we see faith is opposed to the world and the material things of the world, and the Holy Spirit is opposed to the supernatural prince of this world. "HE that is in you" against "he that is in the world". "He that is in the world" is manifested through persons, "many false prophets are gone out into the world"; "this is that antichrist. . . and even now already is it in the world". Satan working through people. Therefore we are told to test everything, however good it may seem to be, and to "prove the spirits, whether they be of God".

These are the two forms of 'overcoming' set before us. Those of you who know union with Christ, that you are begotten of God, partakers of His nature, stand in your place of victory, and by faith you shall overcome all the things of the world around you, and by the Spirit of God dwelling within your spirit you will be able to overcome the spirit that is in the world, the "Wicked One". But you have to resist both.

Freedom from the World: You will not know victory over Satan until you have victory over the world, for he works through the world- things, the world's teachers, the world's ways. If you want to know the mightiest deliverance, and real victory over Satan and all his hosts, you must see to it that Satan has no grip upon you through the things of this world. "He that warreth entangleth not himself with the affairs of this life" (2 Timothy 2 v4).

If only God's children could get absolutely free from the world, from the spirit of this age, the artificial life of the world, so that their hearts were not bound and entangled and held by the things of the world, all of which are material for the devil to work upon! I have seen men untrue to God for the sake of what people will say! Men have sacrificed the truth of God which they knew, because of their reputation. The devil knows how to roar and to frighten men into silence, and the only souls who dare to go out against Satan in the strength and power of God, are those who have nothing to lose, because they fear none but God.

Do you want victory? Are you willing to stand alone, like Luther, and say, 'Here I stand. God helping me, I can do no other?' Oh you say, it does not matter about me! Yes it does. It will cost you as much in your Mission Hall, or Church, or town, or with your friend, as ever it cost Luther or anyone else. But if you are determined to know victory over Satan, he must not be able to beat you with the things of this world. If he knows you are absolutely severed from them, he will not waste his time working through them, but if he knows that there is some preacher, or some friend, you lean upon, and cling to, he will know where to attack you. And God will permit it.

God's threshing machine: God is preparing His saints for glory, and, as someone has said, the devil is His threshing machine. As with Job, everything he can touch he will touch, but only with God's permission. "Satan hath obtained you by asking, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Are you free from the trammels of this world? You have thought much of putting your life right, have you got your spirit right? If you have an independent spirit, an unyielding spirit, a grasping spirit, entangled with the goods of this world, how can the Holy Spirit fill you and liberate you and give you victory over the prince of this world?

"He that is begotten of God overcometh the world", and it is then that you can overcome the spirit that is in the world.