

## Overcoming Adversity

'I (Jesus) have told you these things so that in Me, you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (oppression, trials, distress, frustration), but cheer up! I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

'Whoever believes Jesus is the Anointed Messiah is born of God. Whoever loves the Father also loves the child (fellow believer) who is born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. This shows the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. Whoever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith. Those who overcome the world, are they who believe that Jesus is the Son of God' (1 John 5:1 to 5).

There are many areas in this life that we have to overcome, and overcoming is not easy nor is it pleasant. We may not see the results of our overcoming until we get to heaven and receive our rewards, gifts and are granted permission to sit on the throne beside Jesus, Who sits beside the Father. Jesus overcame everything by quoting verses from the Bible, including being goaded, mocked and lied to by the devil. He overcame extreme hunger and temptation soon after He was baptised by full immersion in the river. 'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. For forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing in those days. After the forty-day fast was completed He was very hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God'" (Luke 4:2 to 4). 'To them who overcome I will give the hidden manna' (Revelation 2:17). 'To them who overcome, I will give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of My God' (Revelation 2:7).

By saying, "If You are the Son of God," the devil was tempting Jesus to react. The devil knew Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, but he was mocking Jesus' place in the Holy Trinity. We, as humans probably would have argued the point but all Jesus did to overcome the situation was quote scripture. When the devil told Jesus to turn the stone into bread, he was again goading Jesus into reacting. Jesus is our creator so He could easily have made bread out of stone but once again, all He did was quote a verse. What would we have done? We probably would have shown off by turning the stone into bread to prove our point, but Jesus overcame the temptation to create bread unnecessarily. God the Father sent angels to serve Jesus and provide His needs (Matthew 4:11).

'The devil, leading Jesus up on a high mountain showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil said to Him, "I will give you all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me; and I give it to whomever I want. If You will worship before me, it will all be Yours" (Luke 4:5 to 7).

That was a lie because the scriptures say the earth is the Lord's and everything that is on the earth, plus the whole universe (heavens) belongs to God and not one verse spoken by God says He has ever given it away. God gave the surface of the earth to mankind to dwell but it still belongs to God. 'All the earth is Mine' (Exodus 19:5). 'The Lord your God has allotted the sun, moon and stars to all the peoples under heaven' (Deuteronomy 4:19). 'Behold, to the Lord your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein' (Deuteronomy 10:14). 'Who has first given to Me that I should repay him? Everything under the heavens is Mine' (Job 41:11). 'God is The King of all the earth' (Psalm 47:7). For thus says the Lord who created the heavens, The Lord who formed the earth and made it, Who established it and did not create it a waste, Who formed it to be inhabited: "I am The Lord and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:18).

For the devil to have led Jesus up the mountain and later to Jerusalem, Jesus would have voluntarily followed because the devil could not have forced the Son of God to do anything. What would we have done if devil lied to us? We probably would have fallen for the lie like Eve did. We need to understand that the devil lies to us all the time and we need to know how to overcome his lies. Jesus did not challenge the devil's lie with the above verses, instead He overcame the lies by telling him to: "Get behind Me Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and you shall serve Him only.'" (Luke 4:8). When Jesus was teaching the disciples, He made it clear the devil lies to us and is a liar. "The devil does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own for he is a liar, and the father of lies' (John 8:44).

The devil mocked Jesus again and attempted to get Jesus to tempt God Himself. 'He led Jesus to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down

from here, for it is written, 'He will put His angels in charge of You to guard You. On their hands they will bear You up lest perhaps You dash Your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, "It has been written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Luke 4:9 to 12). Every time Jesus was tempted He overcame the temptation by quoting scriptures from the book of Deuteronomy.

Jesus overcame homelessness. Jesus said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Sometimes Jesus stayed up all night praying. 'He went to the mountain to pray and he continued all night in prayer to God' (Luke 6:12). Sometimes He stayed in the home of friends like Lazarus, Martha and Mary who lived in Bethany. 'He went to Bethany and lodged there' (Matthew 21:17). 'Martha welcomed Him into her house' (Luke 10:38). 'They who overcome, I will make a pillar in the temple of My God and they will go out from there no more. I will write on them the name of My God, and My own new name and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God' (Revelation 3:12).

Jesus overcame the feeling of betrayal. Peter denied Jesus three times then Jesus challenged Peter three times about his commitment to Him, and then gave him a mandate to feed new believers (lambs and sheep) with the Word of God. Peter initially said to Him, "Lord, I will lay down my life for you."

Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Listen, you will deny Me three times then a rooster will crow" (John 13:37 & 38) ... A woman at the door asked Peter, "Are you one of this Man's disciples?" He said, "I am not." ... Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "You are one of his disciples." He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the servants of the high priest said, "Did I see you in the garden with Him?" Peter denied it again and immediately the rooster crowed' (John 18:17, 25 to 27) ... 'Jesus turned and looked at Peter, then Peter remembered the Lord's words, how He said to him, "Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times" (Luke 22:61). 'Peter went out and wept bitterly' (Matthew 26:75).

The strange thing about the crowing of the rooster, is that it crowed at the wrong time. Roosters normally crow at sunrise, not late in the day. When Jesus turned and looked at Peter, we can only imagine the expression on Jesus' face and how 'the look' stabbed Peter through the heart, for him to react so strongly. A few days later, after Jesus had risen from the dead He challenged Peter about his commitment to Him as Saviour and Messiah, almost 'rubbing his face' in his sin of betrayal, until Peter became distressed. Jesus put a strong emphasis on the verse He had quoted to Peter and the other disciples; 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. This is the first commandment' (Mark 12:30). 'The third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after He had risen from the dead, after they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, do you love Me more than these?"

He said to Jesus, "Yes Lord. You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." Jesus asked him a second time, "Simon, do you love Me?"

He said to Jesus, "Yes Lord. You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus asked him the third time, "Simon, do you love Me?"

Peter was grieved (distressed, upset) because He asked him the third time. He answered, "Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:14 to 17).

'They who overcome will be arrayed in dazzling white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels' (Revelation 3:5). Where Peter had denied Jesus, Jesus was now saying He would do the opposite; He would confess every overcomer to the Father and to the angels.

By submitting to the will of God, Jesus overcame the dread of knowing He was going to be violently murdered. Jesus said He was feeling so sad it was already like death and He was so distressed He suffered Hematidrosis, the bursting of blood vessels just under the skin that surround sweat glands, making His beads of sweat look like drops of blood. Jesus prayed and asked the Father three times to remove the death of crucifixion from Him. Many Christians already have, and many more in the future will be put to death for their faith in Jesus, but if they overcome that terrible situation, they will be well rewarded in heaven. 'Jesus came with them to Gethsemane and said to Peter, James and John, "Sit here, while I go there and pray" ... Jesus began to show grief, was severely troubled and was deeply depressed. He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went forward a little, fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me. But, not My will but Your will." ... A second time He prayed, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." ... He prayed a third time saying the same words' (Matthew 26:36 to 44). 'Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John and began to be struck with terror, deeply troubled and depressed. He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with grief so that it almost kills Me!" ... He prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible

to You. Please remove this cup from Me. However, not My will but Your will be done" (Mark 14:33 to 36). 'Being in agony He prayed more earnestly until His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground' (Luke 22:44). In the crucifixion Jesus overcame torture, thirst and everything the devil could throw at Him. 'Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life. They who overcome will not be harmed by the second death' (Revelation 2:10 & 11).

Jesus overcame and abolished death itself. People who walk with God in committed fellowship and serve Him faithfully will never experience the second death. Our mortal bodies may die but we will live with God forever in our new immortal bodies. 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting? Hades (hell), where is your victory? The sting of death is sin ... but thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus' (1 Corinthians 15:54 to 56). 'The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades (hell) gave up the dead who were in them ... Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire' (Revelation 20:13 & 14). 'They who overcome will not be harmed by the second death' (Revelation 2:11).

We need to overcome evil by doing good things and walking in the holy Light of God. 'The Light shines in the dark world and the darkness does not overcome Light' (John 1:5). 'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good' (Romans 12:21). 'I have written to you fathers (mature Christians) because you know Him Who is from the beginning. I have written to you young men' (not so mature Christians) because you are strong and the Word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one. I write to you little children (new baby Christians) because you know the Father. Do not love the world neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not from the Father, but is the world's. The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does the will of God remains forever' (1 John 2:14 to 17). 'They who overcome and they who keep My works to the end, to them I will give authority over the nations. They will rule the nations with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots as I also have received of my Father, and I will give them (the overcomers and faithful servants) the Bright Morning Star' (Revelation 2:26 to 28).

We need to overcome the spirit of antichrist that is in the whole earth. Almost daily we meet people who refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Anyone who denies the truth of Jesus coming in the flesh to bring salvation by faith, has the spirit of antichrist operating in them. Any religion that will not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God is an antichrist religion. 'By this you know the Spirit of God, because every Spirit who confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is of God, but every spirit who denies that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist. You have heard that it will come. It is in the world already. You are of God and have overcome the antichrist, because greater is He (the Holy Spirit) Who is in you than he (the spirit of antichrist) that is in the world. They (the unsaved) are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world understands them' (1 John 4:2 to 5). 'To them who overcome I will give the hidden manna, and I will give them a white stone; on the stone a new name written which no one knows but they who receive it' (Revelation 2:17).

Although Peter denied Jesus three times, after he was filled with the fire of Holy Spirit he became a pillar of strength in the overall early church. Peter lived a life without any 'grey' areas. He was very 'black or white' in his walk with the Lord. Read what he thought of people who first accepted then rejected the Gospel. He spoke very strong words indeed. 'These, as unreasoning creatures, born to live as natural animals to be taken and destroyed, speaking evil in matters about which they are ignorant, will in their destroying surely be destroyed, receiving the wages of unrighteousness, people who count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, they are spots and blemishes, revelling in their deceit while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery, who cannot cease from sin, enticing unsettled souls, having a heart trained in greed, children of cursing ... These are wells without water, clouds driven by a storm for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved forever, uttering great swelling words of emptiness, they entice in the lusts of the flesh by disregarding normal sexual conduct, those who are trying to escape from those who live in error, promising them liberty while they themselves are slaves of corruption, for a man is brought into bondage by whoever overcomes him. If after they have escaped the defilement of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus and they are again entangled in it and are overcome by sin, the last state has become worse for them than the first' (2 Peter 2:12 to 20). Those who accept then reject the Gospel often become aggressive non-believers but Jesus will ultimately overcome them. 'These will war against the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those who are with Him (Jesus), those who are called, chosen and faithful will also overcome' (Revelation 17:14).

An example of an unrepentant person is the difference between Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. Peter denied Jesus three times but he repented with bitter tears, or tears brought on by a deep sense of shame and guilt. Peter was challenged by Jesus but was forgiven and went on to be a mighty apostle, evangelist and servant of the Lord. The scriptures say if we deny the Lord He will deny us. 'Everyone who confesses Me (Jesus) before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 10:32 & 33). Peter was forgiven because he repented. All the disciples scattered in terror when Jesus was arrested, just as Jesus said they would. Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me tonight, for it is written, 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will scatter'" ... 'All the disciples left Him and fled' (Matthew 26:31 & 56). All the disciples except Judas repented and became apostles. Matthew wrote the epistle of Matthew. Mark wrote the epistle of Mark. John wrote the four epistles: John, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John and the Book of Revelation. Peter wrote the two epistles that carry his name: 1st and 2nd Peter.

On the other hand, Judas was filled with remorse, wept bitter tears and instead of repenting he went out and hung himself. Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him and made that clear during His last Passover meal. 'When evening had come, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating He said, "Surely I tell you, one of you will betray Me." They were deeply distressed and each asked Him, "Is it me, Lord?" Jesus answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me' (Matthew 26:20 to 23). 'Jesus said, "It is he to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it." When He had dipped the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot' (John 13:26). 'When Judas who betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned he felt remorse and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, "I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? You see to it." He threw down the pieces of silver in the sanctuary and departed. He went away and hanged himself' (Matthew 27:3 to 5). He could have repented but sadly he did not and Jesus said it would be better for Judas if he had never been born because of the eternal penalty he faces. 'The Son of Man goes, as it is written of Him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born' (Matthew 26:24; Mark 14:21). Jesus called Judas the Son of Perdition which means Son of Destruction. 'While I (Jesus) was with them (the disciples) in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You have given Me I have kept. None of them is lost except the Son of Perdition (destruction), that the Scripture might be fulfilled' (John 17:12). The scripture Jesus was speaking about is: 'Yes, My Own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me' (John 13:18; Psalm 41:9). If only Judas had overcome his emotions like Peter did and repented of his sin instead of suiciding, he may well have become an apostle too. We can see by the actions of Judas that feeling guilty or remorseful for sin is not enough. God demands repentance before we are forgiven.

When we come before the Lord in repentance we open the door to answered prayers, earthly blessings and eternal life. When we overcome adversity, difficulties and the results of our own sins (like Peter did), we open the door to amazing eternal rewards, gifts and heavenly privileges. Jesus said, 'They who overcome, I will give them these things (gifts, rewards and privileges). I will be their God and they will be My people' (Revelation 21:7). 'They who overcome, I will give them permission to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne' (Revelation 3:21).

Amen and God bless you.

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