

The Victory of Faith **by Dr. Lee Roberson**

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—I John 5:4,5.

John plainly states that the believer overcomes the world. This statement doesn't seem to harmonize with the defeated lives of many of God's children. All around us are those who declare positively that they believe in Christ the Saviour, yet admit they are living defeated lives.

WHAT IS A DEFEATED LIFE?

A life without fruit. We are commanded by the Lord to bear fruit. Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

A life without power. If the power were present, the life would not be defeated. Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me. . ." (Acts 1:8).

A life without a positive influence. The life of the victorious Christian points in one direction—toward the Lord. The defeated life has no positive influence.

A life dominated by the flesh. The Corinthians were defeated Christians. Paul called them "babes in Christ." They were carnal, not spiritual.

A life directed at times by Satan.

Are you saying that a Christian's life is never directed by the evil one? If so, you are speaking against the Word of God. Simon Peter said to Christians,

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. "—I Peter 5:8,9.

James also said, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). These and many other Scriptures show that the Devil is constantly after us. Some Christians succumb to his enticing words, and they are directed for a while by Satan.

A life dictated by the world. John tells us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). The apostle indicates the danger of loving the world; therefore, he warns the children of God against this love.

In a much stronger way, James said, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). The Apostle Paul, knowing the great danger of a Christian's life dictated by the world, said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14). And again, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (vs. 17).

The defeated life is dominated by the world, the flesh and the Devil—three enemies who work for the constant defeat of a Christian. God wants you to be victorious! Satan wants you to be defeated! Your soul is beyond his reach, but you can still be touched through the world and his subtle suggestions. What a dead drag the defeated Christian is to himself and to all around him! What a hindrance to the cause of Christ! He does not glorify God, and he constantly sheds a negative influence of defeatism on others. But listen to John: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Who is born of God? Look at I John 5:1: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." Who overcomes the world? The one who is born of God. When you become a child of God, the victory begins. You are saved, eternally saved. All of the essentials for victory are in your possession. Plainly, John tells us that no one can overcome the world save he who is born of the Spirit. Are you born of God? Then you are an overcomer. But how do we overcome? The answer—by faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

By the same faith through which you were saved, you overcome the world. This victory is not accomplished all at one stroke. It is a lifelong business. We are to be overcomers day by day as we exercise our faith. Now here is a big verse that we need to remember—Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This was so in salvation. We had to hear the Word of God; we were convicted by the Holy Spirit, and we received Christ as Saviour. It is so in the life of conquest. If there is to be overcoming faith, then we must turn to the infallible Word of God. There are three things that I want to impress upon your minds tonight.

I. THE PROMISES OF GOD

As we turn to the Word of God to receive faith and to have the increase of our faith, then we are confronted at once by the promises of our eternal God. What about these promises?

1. Made by One who cannot lie. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."—Titus 1:2.

This needs to be established in our minds once and for all: what God says He means, and what God says is eternally true.

Our God is not like the man who called in a lawyer to make up his will. He told the lawyer to put down so many hundreds of dollars for this one, so many hundreds for another one. Finally, the lawyer said, "But, sir, I don't believe you have all that money to leave." The man replied, "Oh, I know that just as well as you, but I want to show them my good will." God does not work on such a principle. What He says, He can fulfill. How foolish we are to doubt His word!

It is strange we trust each other,
And only doubt our Lord;
We take the word of mortals,
And yet distrust His Word.
But, oh, what light and glory,
Would shine for all our days,
If we always would remember,
God means just what He says.

2. Change not. Wars and conflicts, turmoil and strife do not change the promises of God. What He has said abides. The Father does not turn or change. With Him there is no shadow of turning.

The promises of men are so changeable! Here is a man who came to me and begged me to sign his note. He made a definite promise that he would stand back of his own signature and that I would not be involved in any way. He repeated his promises and reinforced them with many strong words. I believed him and signed the note. The promise of the man was the promise of a weak person, for his promise was affected by working conditions, his own changeable mind, and the sin of his life. As a consequence, I had to pay the note of \$119.00.

Ah, but God's promises change not! He is not affected by world conditions or even the instability of His children. His promises change not!

3. Cover every situation. Yes, there is a promise for every need. Are you lonely? Then listen to the word of Jesus for He said, ".lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Are you sick? Then hear His word to the Apostle Paul, ". . .My grace is sufficient for thee. . ." (II Cor. 12:9).

Are you discouraged? Then listen to the psalmist, "God is our refuge and

strength, a very present help in trouble" (46:1).

Do you feel a great weakness? Then listen to Isaiah, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (40:31).

Are you burdened with many cares? Then listen to I Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." A promise for every situation!

II. THE PICTURES OF FAITH

In the Word of God we find a full gallery of the pictures of faith. On every side we see men and women who believed God, rested upon His promises, and found Him to be true. We cannot mention all, but we can think of a few.

Gaze for a moment upon Abraham, called "the friend of God." His faith led him to follow the Lord, though he knew not where he was going. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). Abraham, the father of the faithful. See him as he offered up his son Isaac. What a test of faith, yet how true was this man of God.

Look upon the picture of Moses, a man of faith who turned his back upon the riches of Egypt and chose the afflictions of the people of God. By faith he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

See the faith of Joshua who crossed the Jordan on dry land. He compassed the city of Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell down.

See the picture of Elijah, that noble man from Gilead. No one but God stood with him when he denounced the sin of the king. No one but God encouraged him on Mt. Carmel in the contest with the prophets of Baal. Elijah was subject to like passions as we are, but he had faith. He prayed, and the heavens were locked up. He prayed again, and the rain came.

Look for a moment upon the picture of Daniel whose faith failed not in a heathen land. He knew the purpose of God would not be turned aside by any earthly consideration. As a lad, his faith failed not when he was tempted to eat and drink of the dainties of Babylon. As a man, his faith failed not when he was commanded not to pray. As an old man, his faith failed not when he had to deliver the judgment message to the king. Here is a noble picture to behold.

Can you not see why the Word says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Everywhere you turn in the Bible, you see a

picture of faith. In Old or New Testament, it is always the same. Look upon the portraits of such faithful men as the Apostle Peter, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John. Yes, look upon the picture of John who penned the words of our text by the Spirit of God. He was an overcomer, despite all the enemy could do. He stood fast and lived out a long life without bowing his neck to the world.

Of course, there are other pictures of faith outside the Word of God—pictures made possible because men believed the Word. J. Hudson Taylor, the missionary to China, was a man of faith. David Livingstone, who spent his life in Africa, was a man of faith. If you would have strong faith, allow these examples to speak to your heart.

III. THE PRACTICE OF FAITH

We can read the promises of God, study the pictures of faith; but nothing happens until we put into practice our faith. When the tempter comes, then we must take the shield of faith and quench the fiery darts of the wicked. When we are face to face with a great need, we must claim the promise of Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Constantly we look into the Word of God, then go out to walk the way of faith. We do not need to look to the morrow but receive the promises as manna for each day.

I believe the Word invites us to test the promises of God. I do not mean that we are to be presumptuous and do foolish things, but we are to take the promises, believe them, put them to a test, and see that God means what He says.

I am reminded of the illustration of the preacher who visited an old man held fast to his chair by rheumatism. The man had his Bible open in front of him, and the preacher noticed that the word "proved" was written time and again in the margins. Turning over a few pages, he found by the side of "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," the word "proved." So it went throughout the Book. The sick man had written his own experience on the margin beside every promise.

Remember—God gave the promises to YOU. We are so accustomed to thinking that what we read is for someone else that we fail to receive the blessing for ourself.

If you are saved today, it is because you believe God's Word regarding salvation. If you are to be victorious, then it must be because you believe the promises and overcome the world by your faith. One time D. L. Moody was to speak to several thousand prisoners in a certain state

penitentiary. It had been announced that after Mr. Moody's address, a pardon would be presented by the governor to a certain prisoner who had made a good record. No one but the governor knew who the fortunate prisoner was. There was high excitement. Finally the moment came. The governor stepped forward with a pardon in his hand. He read out a name. There was a wave of applause. He called out the name a second time. Still the prisoner did not move from his seat, held fast, doubtless, by his unbelief that he, a life term, should be granted freedom. Finally, nearby companions pushed him from his seat, and the man came forward with tears streaming down his cheeks to take the pardon from the hand of the governor. Then the warden commanded the great audience of prisoners to fall in and march back to their cells. When the cellmates came marching past him, the man, still holding the pardon, fell in and, taking up the locked step, started the long march back to his established place behind the bars. The attendants pulled him from the line saying, "Man, don't you know you are free!"

This story illustrates the manner in which many of you Christians fail to believe the promises of God. You harbor doubts about salvation because you will not take the assurance of the Word of God. You live poor, limping, halting lives because you will not believe the promise that God will supply every need, take care of every emergency.

Let us begin to practice our faith, believe the promises, be inspired by the pictures, and daily practice our faith in God.

When Cardinal Manning was experiencing great depression of soul and a darkening of his faith, he went into the shop of a well-known book concern. There he saw one of his own books entitled, Faith in God. As he waited for a copy of his book to be sent up from the storeroom, he heard a clerk calling up from the elevator shaft, "Manning's Faith in God is all gone!" He took the words to heart.—w. B. Knight

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