

REVELATION – SERMON 8

THE OVERCOMER

Revelation 2:7

INTRODUCTION

- We all love to hear stories of those who succeeded against the odds.
- The Bible is full of stories of how God used the most unlikely people to accomplish great things.
- In verse seven the Lord gives an exhortation that is repeated identically for all the messages to the churches: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”.
- Notice that the focus changes here from the Lord speaking in the second person (thou, thee) directly to the church; to the third person (he, him) speaking more generally to all who will listen.
- This is a very characteristic saying of Jesus which He often used during His earthly ministry (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; Mark 4:23; 7:16)
- Sadly, while all have ears, few have ears *to hear*; they do not want to hear God’s call to repent of sinful ways; of the terrible judgments that await sinners in hell; of the Gospel of Christ as the only means of salvation; of the second coming of Christ to judge the world (cf. 2 Timothy 4:4)

- Christians too often become “dull of hearing” (Hebrews 5:11)
- As we consider what is written to the overcomers in this verse, we will firstly look at the specific promise to the Ephesian church, before looking generally at what it means to be an overcomer.

I. THE PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMER

A. The tree of life

1. This tree was placed in Eden for man to eat of (Genesis 2:9)
2. After the fall, man was banished from the tree of life and its life-giving properties (Genesis 3:22-24)
3. The tree of life is used representatively in Proverbs
 - a. For wisdom (Proverbs 3:18)
 - b. For righteousness (Proverbs 11:30)
 - c. For satisfied hope (Proverbs 13:12)
 - d. For a wholesome tongue (Proverbs 15:4)
4. Now, spiritually dead sinners find life through another “tree of life”, the cross of Christ (1 Peter 2:24)
5. To have access to the tree of life is to be a possessor of eternal life

6. It is the privilege of those who have been glorified, and have incorruptible bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42-49, 51-58; Philippians 3:21; Revelation 22:2,14)

B. Paradise

1. "Paradise" is a Persian word meaning an enclosed garden, such as a royal park
2. Before Christ's resurrection, paradise was the abode of the righteous dead, separated from hell by a great gulf (Luke 16:22-23; 23:43)
3. Subsequent to Christ's resurrection, paradise is in the third heaven, in God's presence (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)
4. After the Millennium, paradise will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth (Revelation 22:2)
5. Like Adam, who lost communion with God in the garden of Eden, the Ephesians had left their first love of Christ, but were encouraged by the promise of eternal fellowship with Him in paradise

II. THE PEOPLE WHO OVERCOME

- A. One view is that the overcomers are believers who remain faithful, and in doing so, retain their salvation
 1. In this scenario, believers who do not maintain their faithfulness will "fall from grace" and lose their salvation
 2. This "Arminian" view denies the doctrine of eternal security; that those who are truly saved "will never

perish” (John 10:28) and are “kept by the power of God” (1 Peter 1:5)

- B. Another view is that overcomers comprise a special category of Christians who live victorious lives
 - 1. These people hold to “Free Grace Theology”
 - 2. They teach that some believers receive Jesus as their Lord, but others don’t
 - 3. They divide believers into two groups: spiritual and carnal
 - 4. They teach that only some believers are disciples
 - 5. In this view, overcomers are rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ, while non-overcomers are punished
 - 6. They teach that during the Millennium, non-overcoming believers will spend 1000 years in outer darkness, with weeping and gnashing of teeth
 - 7. Many who hold this position also have a false view of sanctification, which teaches a “second blessing” subsequent to salvation where believers become perfected (eg. Wesleyan, Keswick, Pentecostal)
- C. The Scriptural position is that all true believers are overcomers
 - 1. The promises given to the overcomers describe the blessings of salvation enjoyed by all believers

- a. In Revelation 2 & 3 there are thirteen specific promises
 - b. For instance, *all* believers eat of the tree of life; *all* believers are unhurt by the second death; *all* believers are clothed in white; *all* believers' names are in the book of life
2. Elsewhere in the New Testament, all believers are defined as overcomers
 - a. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5)
 - b. "Ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:13-14; 4:4)
 - c. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)
3. These promises to the overcomers are derived from the believer's position in Christ
 - a. In Christ we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3)
 - b. The believer is a son of God through Christ, the Son of God
 - c. The believer is righteous through Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1)
 - d. The believer is made to "sit in heavenly places" through Christ who is set there (Ephesians 2:6)

- e. The believer is an overcomer through Christ the overcomer (John 16:33)
- 4. The saints overcome by the blood of the Lamb, which is evidenced by their testimony and willingness to suffer for Him (Revelation 12:11)

III. THE PRACTICE OF THE OVERCOMER

- A. Though all believers are overcomers through Christ, there must be a practical outworking of this reality in their lives
 - 1. The Scriptures exhorts the believer to *walk* according to his position in Christ (Romans 6:4)
- B. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all actively opposing us, seeking to bring us to defeat
 - 1. The world seeks to capture our affections and conform us to it (1 John 2:15; Romans 12:2)
 - 2. The flesh and its lusts war against our souls (Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11)
 - 3. The devil assaults us through temptations and persecutions (Revelation 13:7)
- C. There are too many Christians who are overcomers in Christ, yet do not enjoy the blessedness of victory in their daily lives
 - 1. The Corinthians were “sanctified and justified” (1 Corinthians 6:11), yet they had envying, and strife,

divisions and immorality among them (1 Corinthians 3)

D. The key to victory is faith (1 John 5:4)

1. “A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.” (C H Spurgeon)
2. Like the apostles, we must pray, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)
3. We must make use of those things that feed and nourish our faith – prayer and the word of God
4. We must shun those things that diminish our faith
 - a. Cease from hearing error. (Proverbs 19:27)
 - b. Turn affections from worldly things (Colossians 3:2)
 - c. Make not provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14)
 - d. Put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18)
5. The Lord prays for His tempted people, “that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31-32)

CONCLUSION

1. Are you an overcomer?
2. Have you been born of God through faith in Jesus Christ? (John 1:12-13)

3. Mere *professors* of Christ are not overcomers and will not enter heaven
4. We must be *possessors* of Christ
5. Remember that Christians do fail and fall, yet the Lord's hand ensures they "shall not utterly be cast down" (Psalm 37:23-24)
6. Are walking in victory or defeat?