

The Overcomer at the End-Time and
The "Overcomer's" Pathway to the Throne
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Reading: Revelation 12

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

As to these words in the eleventh verse, we remind ourselves again, that they are part of an utterance by a loud voice in heaven at a time when the heavenly hosts were watching a colossal conflict which was taking place in the lower heavens, a conflict between celestial and diabolical forces; Michael and his angels on one side, Satan and his angels on the other. The occasion of the conflict was an object, a corporate object here spoken of as a man-child, or a son; which son, or man-child, having been raptured to the throne, precipitates this terrific battle and its issue with Satan and his angels being cast out of the heavens - "no more place being found" for them there - down to the earth. Then a loud voice is heard in heaven (a "great voice" the revised version has it) saying: *"Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down who accused them before our God day and night. And they [our brethren] overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore, rejoice O heavens and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."* There is very much of detail in that with which we shall not stay for the moment, but note the occasion of that utterance as well as the substance of it, for that, and all that is connected therewith, is what is before us at this time.

Now it will be necessary for us to just look at the book itself for a moment or two and make a very hurried survey.

We note that chapter 11 brings us to the time of the end. The seventh trumpet closes that period; that is the completing of things, of that phase or part of the dispensation. Chapter 12 deals with the end time, but it is very important for us to see that chapters 12 to 14 are a parenthesis. That is, they are not in the direct line of the narrative; they are - as the word parenthesis means - a section or clause inserted for explanation or confirmation of what has been said. The narrative is complete in itself but something is introduced in a parenthetical way to elucidate and explain certain things in it, and so chapters 12 to 14 inclusive are a parenthesis, an explanation of what has already been said. Recognizing that, if we are able thus to see, chapter 12 corresponds with chapters 2 and 3, and the word which is the key, or the link, between chapter 12 and chapters 2 and 3, is the word "overcome." We know how all those messages in chapters 2 and 3 come to the Overcomer, that is, they are concluded with "to him that overcometh." The link between that section and chapter 12 is just that word: *"And they overcame,"* the overcomer is the key and the link. In chapter 12 the man-child, the son, is the group of overcomers at the time of the end.

I suppose I ought to stay here to say that that may not be agreed to by some. I know quite well that it is so, and if I say it with emphasis please do not think that I want to impose upon you my own conviction or that I am trying to make you accept that interpretation. My emphasis is the strength of my own conviction, that is all. You are still to go to the Lord about this thing and get from Him His witness. To me this is a matter of unparalleled importance, and I think we may see some of the importance of this thing as we go on. Now that also is by way of parenthesis. Let me repeat as to what I feel myself, that the man-child in chapter 12 is the group of overcomers at the time of the end. I note two things; that this man-child is referred to as "they." Verse 5, *"she was delivered of a son, a man-child,"* verse 11, *"and they overcame him..."* That is not a single entity, that is a corporate body. It is true the word "son" (v. 5, R.V.) is the Greek word *huios*, frequently used of

Christ; but the combination in this chapter of *teknon* (twice), not so used, and *huios* (once), only strengthens if it does not prove our point, i.e., the "Overcomer" - "Man-child" - is Christ *and* a company out of the church caught up to the Throne before the tribulation (Rev. 3:10, 21). Some of you may not, of course, see the value or force of that; others will, because of a large school of interpretation that thought this man-child was the Lord Jesus and that all this took place when He was born. But the context needs a good deal of wrestling with to conclude that that is so.* (see [Appendix](#))

Now then, if our interpretation is correct, we are able to open out into a larger realm and see the great thing which is in view here. What is the thing that occupies the central and supreme place in this revelation? It is a company associated with Christ in His throne as having overcome the great dragon, the old serpent, the devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, the accuser of the brethren. That is what is here - a company in that throne-position and union with the Lord Jesus, the first and inclusive Overcomer. Now, beloved, that ranges the whole history of this earth or this world. It represents God's primary and ultimate thought concerning man in union with His Son, Jesus Christ. It represents God's original thought concerning His Son, and then His thought concerning those whom He chose in Christ before the world was; and His thought concerning His Son and those whom He chose in Him from eternity was that they should reign and govern and administer this universe for and with God; that they should be linked with the throne of God in universal administration and government. That thought, that truth runs all the way through the Word of God. On that He set His heart. Against that this other one, presented in these various titles representing the varied forms of his activities and character, set himself in one great age-long challenge and resistance. But God had had His thought, His intention, His purpose for us in Christ in relation to His throne, and the overcomers are that. This company embodies the original intention of God, and are God's sphere and instrument of His success. They declare the success of God concerning His original thought, therefore "*Rejoice O ye heavens and ye that dwell therein,*" for God has succeeded in spite of everything. You might think that speaking like that represents some great difficulty for God - not at all. If God had dealt with this whole thing in naked infinity, it would have been like a snap of the fingers to wipe it all out. But it is by Man that He has done it: by Man for man, and that represents a terrific conflict. Now you see what is in view. The achievement of God, the success of God in Christ, in those who are in Christ and that represented by a company, a specific company called "Overcomers".

Over against that, then, everything else is set and to that everything else is related. All that is in the Book of the Revelation is connected with that. Chapter 12 is the key to the whole book. Everything thus far moves up to chapter 12 and everything else moves from chapter 12. Perhaps one ought to keep the connection between 12, 13 and 14 because they are so intimately bound up with one another, but this part of chapter 12 is the pivotal point upon which everything revolves. As you go back and traverse this book you begin with Ephesus and see the first love left. "*I have this against thee, thou hast left thy first love.*" You seek for an explanation of leaving the first love and you find the explanation is not to be found simply in the waning of an enthusiasm, but in the attempted quenching by the deluges of spiritual antagonism, the object being to close down the fire of love for God in the heart. You know that true love for the Lord does not just wane of itself, you do not just give it up and let it go; you know it is by reason of great pressure, great adversity, conflict, discouragement, wearing-out tactics as well as by subtle insinuations and subterfuges and such like things; the snare of the world, deceitfulness of sin, and the awful opposition of the enemy - why? This is not merely a natural, temperamental thing. It is against that ultimate object of the Lord, the throne. You have Balaam's subterfuge leading to spiritual fornication; and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and that woman Jezebel, the false prophetess, and the name to live, but yet dead; mere profession, the false claims of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan; then the lukewarmness of Laodicea.

All these things represent different ways and means by which the enemy has sought to get in to destroy the testimony. You see, the lampstand is the testimony. At that time and in that place it was God's testimony in the earth, and all these things are working against the testimony to destroy it, to quench it, to blot it out, and God is appealing for a maintenance of His testimony, and all these things are against the issue of that testimony as maintained, which is in the throne. And so you find they overcame because of the blood of the Lamb and because of *the word of their testimony*. They have kept the testimony of Jesus, these Overcomers. Do you see the link between these things? And all else you find, whether it be in the nature of the persecutions through which the saints have passed, which are mentioned here; or the subterfuges, the snares, the deceptions of the serpent; or the many trials, adversities, sufferings of the Lord's children, so many that we could never catalogue them; all that we pass through as we seek to go on with the Lord and be faithful, it is all directed against this ultimate issue, the coming of this company of Overcomers to the throne.

It is the explanation of what we are passing through now; the explanation of all trial on the one side, from the adversary's side; sufferings, persecutions, pain, anguish, to quench the testimony with a view to thwarting that rapture to the throne. On the Divine side we are not protected against it because the Lord wants us to overcome, and you will never overcome unless there is something to overcome. There are the two sides, the Divine, sovereign side and the diabolical side to thwart this. All is related to that, beloved, all is leading up to this final fury of the erect dragon waiting to swallow up this corporate company who are to bring about the issue of the ages.

Does it not strike you as a thing of immense moment, that a company (we do not know how many, small or great but comparatively small we judge, a company nevertheless of the Lord's children) are going to be the Lord's occasion for the precipitating of the crisis of the ages; that is, bringing about that time and that condition when and where there is no more place for Satan and his angels in the heavens. I think it is a tremendous thing to say that: *"there was found no more place..."* as though the heavens said: "There is no more room for you here any more."

Now we do not want to get hilarious about it, it is too solemn - but that is the issue: *"no more place in the heavens;"* and that is arrived at by this company being raptured to the throne in the face of the fury of the dragon. They are God's instruments for winding up the old regime which held for thousands of years contrary to God's original thought. Supposing this is that time, supposing that we have entered into this last phase! Only to suppose it is to explain a great deal. But, beloved, the intention of the Lord in these days is to show us how to overcome. We have got to know how to overcome. We have got to come to see the means of overcoming, the ground of overcoming, and that is what is in view as we pursue this matter in these pages, that we shall be put in the way of understanding what overcoming is, and how to overcome.

So we see that with the rapture to the throne of this man-child company a great change takes place in the heavens as well as on the earth. With this rapture the first thing that is seen is war in heaven. The next, the issue of that war: *"no more place"* in heaven for these forces of evil. Therefore, they are cast down out of the heavens, and then a great voice in heaven is heard at the moment of that casting down, saying: *"Now is come..."* (it almost seems to say *"now at last, now at length, now,"* the great eternal now! This hierarchy which has encircled the earth as *"prince of the power of the air," "the world-rulers of this darkness, the principalities and powers, the hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies,"* now at length they are cast down, and now is come) *"the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ."*

I pause to note the distinguishing words - *"Now is come the salvation of our God."* The salvation of our God is come *now*. Sit down with that in this connection for a little while and see where that will lead you. *"Now is come the kingdom of our God;"* the kingdom of our God is come *now*. *"Now is come the power of our God."* The power of our God is come *now*. Here is Divine energy, Divine force, Divine might, here it is *Now*. But then note: *"And the authority of his Christ."* The *exousia* of His Christ; the jurisdiction of the Lord Jesus has come *now*. How much hangs upon this "now"! You weigh these sentences one by one and you see that with this rapture of the man-child there synchronizes this arriving at the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the jurisdiction of His Christ. A great point to reach, that! To fathom all that, we need much more time than at present; we will leave it there for the moment. There is a new phase of things on the earth as well as a new phase of things in the heavens. Before passing to that, note how this thing is put. There is a great voice in heaven, and that great voice says: *"Our God... our brethren."* There is a company in heaven looking on, who call this overcomer group *"our brethren"* and speak of God here as *"our God."* Some already there have been interested in this final overcomer conflict. There have been overcomers in every age and they have overcome and they are interested in this thing to its end, and they say *"our God"* and *"our brethren"* - *"who accuseth our brethren;"* and notice, when you go on, *"Satan is gone down,"* is gone down - that is someone speaking from above, not underneath, saying "Satan is come down." Those there are saying: "he has gone down," they are above.* A new phase then begins on the earth, and then you go on to the other two chapters, 13 and 14.

* *Katabaino* is not always used for "to go down," but sometimes "to come down" or simply "to descend:" but the best authorities translate it in the former sense here, i.e., "has gone down," and that is more than justified by the context, the voice is speaking in heaven and is noting that the "Accuser" has been "cast" down (verse 9).

You have on the one side, antichrist, and on the other side linked with that, the tribulation of those who have not been raptured, or the tribulation on the earth into which those enter who have not been raptured, even the Lord's people. The discrimination in the seven letters is between those who overcome and those who do not overcome. (I cannot accept that the seven letters addressed to the seven Churches were addressed to those who were not the Lord's people, neither to just a few inside a merely professing Church). I believe the messages were addressed to those who were the Lord's people in a state of spiritual apostasy or weakness, out of the way, in a state of declension, and there is a division between the Lord's people who are in a state of declension and those who overcome. I think it is J. N. Darby who says concerning the Philadelphian saints: "but then there were very blessed encouragements given to them. There was an hour of great temptation coming upon the whole world to try those who dwell thereon; some might be victorious *in* the trial, but those who kept the word of His patience would be kept *from* the trial. On the whole world it would come, but where were they? They had gone out of it." That is the position here, and the great tribulation overtakes non-overcoming believers. There will be those who were kept *out* of the great tribulation, but there will be those who *"come up out of,"* who were kept there and who came out of the tribulation in the midst of which they have washed their robes which had become spotted by the world.

We see what is in God's eye, in His mind. We see that the end-time is going to have this central thing, the securing of this overcomer group, this overcomer company. In the securing of that company through spiritual travail, and the rapture of that company, God is going to secure His original purpose, His pre-eminent thought. Changes in heaven and in earth will be related to that. That company will be raptured on a threefold basis. *"They overcame because of the blood of the Lamb."* That is one of the things we have got to consider carefully, more fully; *"because of the blood of the Lamb."* That is foundational. *"And because of the word of their testimony."* The blood of the Lamb was that which was

provided for them, apart from them, the word of their testimony is *their* part. We have got to know, first of all, God's basis of victory, and then our side of the victory, what the word of testimony is by which we overcome. And then, as to the cost, the third factor: "*and they loved not their lives [their souls] unto the death.*"

That is the position as I believe we have it, perhaps only at its beginnings, just now. Maybe we are coming into it. Some of us feel sometimes we could not stand very much more, the spiritual conflict and pressure is so great. Beloved, do you see the tremendous issues bound up with this conflict, do you see the need for us to know what the means of victory and the ground of victory are? Therefore it is necessary that we gather together in days like these. These are times when we need to be in solemn convocation. The ends of the ages are coming upon us and there is a very, very big explanation to the pressure and the suffering, the spiritual intensity through which we are passing now. Some of you are feeling that pressing in, that intense spiritual pressure: it is becoming almost unbearable. There is an explanation, a big explanation, the biggest explanation to anything that ever existed. God is about to accomplish His end and change the aspect of the universe. Oh, wonderful thing! all that, beloved, has its operation in saints. We are in that. That is taking place in us. Perhaps we might sometimes think it might be very much easier if we saw an erect dragon, if these figurative things were literal, we would know where we were and what we had got to do. But it is this spiritual pressure, this thing that comes to us, not in the bare, naked, devilish antagonism of the enemy, but that which is coming in very often along what we call ordinary, everyday things, the domestic things, the business things; yes, all that, coming in that way, it is all the conflict, it is *there*. *But again, we see there is a marvelous explanation to it, and we need grace, much grace, we need a mighty instrengthening of the Lord.*

Oh, unto this, doctrine is not enough, teaching will not do, light merely as a matter of light, beloved, is not always power. No; power is the capacity for going through, and light does not take you through; light may help you to see your way, but you want energy as well as light, and we need in these days the mighty instrengthening of God to get through.

This message will be very pertinent to the situation in which many of God's people are found at this time. The spiritual pressure is growingly intense. The trial of faith is increasingly "fiery." The explanation of God's ways is beyond human ability. There is a cry and a sob in many a devoted heart - "Why, Oh, why," The word is for such. Those who know little of this costly way to the Throne will not feel its appeal. Those who are only interested in theoretical prophetic interpretations will sabotage the point by rejoinders such as "Selective" - (or "Partial Rapture"), of course.

We have no concern to systematize the truth into such theories or "teachings." What is patent to all honest and unprejudiced minds is - as many accredited and highly-respected Bible teachers have taught - that the New Testament *does* discriminate between Christians, and the force of its general and particular teaching is that there is a "crown" which can be missed, and a "calling" which can be forfeited.

There are many letting go the greater for the lesser. The Lord does not bring judgment on them now, but it will be a terrible thing to realise in "*the day*" that they let go "the on-high calling".

APPENDIX

The "Man-child" of Revelation 12

Inasmuch as many have sought to interpret this Scripture as historical in the past, that is, as having been fulfilled before John wrote at Patmos, and as applying to the birth of Christ, Israel being the woman, it will be well if certain very clear points are afresh taken into consideration and honestly faced.

1. The pangs of travail (verse 2).

Where were the birth-pains in Israel when Christ was born?

Israel has never yet travailed unto the birth of Christ.

Isaiah 66:8-24 shows Christ's birth out of the nation *without* travail. That Scripture does not refer to Revelation 12.

2. "*Clothed with the sun*" (verse 1).

The Lord Jesus is *Himself* the sun, "light of the world," and it is the Church which has been invested with that Light; the revelation of Jesus Christ, the whole Truth of God. The Jewish nation has never stood so robed.

3. "*The moon under her feet*" (verse 1).

The moon is an object which has no light of its own, but borrows its light from the sun.

This is exactly what the whole Jewish system of Law and Types did. The Law, the Prophets, the Types, all reflected the Christ, and shone with borrowed light. These are all fulfilled in Christ and realized in the Church, and all are under the feet of - in a subject relation to - the Church. This *cannot* apply to the Jewish nation.

4. "*On her head a crown of twelve stars*" (verse 1).

Stars are heavenly living bodies in a ruling capacity. Twelve is the number of governmental power or order.

The twelve Apostles may be seen to fulfill this part of the symbolism. They come in several times in the "Revelation" as in a place of special honour. What is here, we believe, is that, in the mind of God, the Church is seen in the position of heavenly authority according to Luke 10:19; Ephesians, etc. But, while this is God's thought concerning the whole Church as in "Ephesians," only a company *out of her actually and experimentally* come to know the throne-union in the first instance. Undoubtedly, this is the position today, as it has always been, and this is the occasion for the great amount of exhortation and admonition in the New Testament. And this also is the place and condition which gives rise to the many provisional "Ifs" of the New Testament.

5. "*As soon as it was born,*" or "*When she was delivered*" (verse 4; R .V.).

There is no gap here. Christ was not caught up to the throne when He was born, there was a considerable interval.

6. "*A great red dragon*"

"*Ten horns*" (not crowned).

"*Seven heads*" (crowned) (verse 3).

No such power existed when Christ was born. John was writing nearly a hundred years later than the birth of Christ, and in the seventeenth chapter of this book he shows that only five of these powers had been overthrown, and one was in existence; the seventh was yet to be (17:10). The ten horns as ten kings obtain power at the same time as the Beast (17:12 ; cf. Daniel 7:20).

All these come into view when the Gentile Dominion is at its close.

The Beast and the False Prophet (Political and Religious) are the two aspects of the Dragon which persecute the true Church at the end, and the very removal of the "man-child" is a main cause for this assault and of the commencement of the tribulation.

7. *"War in heaven," "The dragon cast down"*
(*"The old serpent, the devil, Satan, the deceiver"*), *"No more place in heaven"*.

This did not take place either at the birth or the ascension of Christ.

"Ephesians" still sees conflict in the heavenlies (6:12).

Satan is still "the prince of the power of the air".

True, Christ is far above all principality and power, etc., and we are seated in Him there, but the clearing of the lower heavens with the result that the Church administers and governs the world *therefrom* is something yet to be, and the "manchild" is the fulfillment of Revelation 3:21,22, unto this end.

We have not incorporated these notes into the body of the message because it is our aim not to allow the messages to be of a controversial character, but always straightforward spiritual teaching. The notes are added that it might be seen that we are not saying things without very good ground in the Word, and careful meditation and study therein.

The "Overcomer's" Pathway to the Throne

We are now going to consider the pathway of the Overcomer to the Throne. We have seen that the last thing said in the Church age is "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne even as I overcame and am sat down with My Father in His Throne." Rev. 3:21 "And the 'man-child' was caught up to the Throne." Rev. 12

Now the first step in this pathway has to do with the Blood, the Cross and the Will of God. That is primary. That comes before anything else because it was the first issue; it will be the ultimate issue — the will of God. Before ever we have to do with sin by the Blood and all the aspects and phases of the redemptive work of the Lord through His cross by His Blood; before ever the question of sin arose, the question of the will of God arose. That is where we begin. The sin question and all the redemptive work of Christ by His Blood in His Cross is subsequent to and consequent upon the violation of the will of God. Thus before ever we reach the stage of dealing with sin specifically by the Blood we have to get behind it and recognize that the foundation of it all is the Will of God. I want to be just as clear as possible so that we shall not get into a merely theoretical or theological realm, but remain very practical, and we want just to get before the eye of our heart what is in view. What is in view is the position of victory and power over the adversary and his hosts. That is what is before us here. Revelation 12 brings that clearly into view. The great issue, the all-inclusive issue of the ages for eternity is bound up with this, the reaching on the part of a company to a position of victory and power over the adversary and his hosts. Now that is not done mechanically, we do not reach that position automatically. It is not reached by our recognition of certain doctrinal truths, and adopting certain attitudes and terms. I say that to try and clear the ground of misconceptions, because there are those, I fear, who think that if they take a certain attitude towards certain doctrinal propositions about victory and employ certain terms and phraseology, they are in the way of being Overcomers, and that they are in a place of authority over the enemy.

That is not the case. Many who have adopted such attitudes and employed such terms and phraseology have just been the playthings of the enemy, and he has made fun of their phraseology and their terms and their attitudes. It has not worked out. This thing is not realized in that way, beloved; we do not get power over the enemy and his hosts by terminology, phraseology, or by the acceptance of teaching about this thing, or even taking up attitudes. There may be a place for the truth, there is a place for doctrine, teaching, and there is a necessity for attitudes, but these are not sufficient, and we do not attain to the position in that way, but it is a matter of a certain spiritual inwrought work of the Holy Spirit; it is a matter of certain spiritual elements being in the very nature and constitution of the Overcomer. Something has to be put into their very constitution. It is spiritual, not technical.

What is the basic thing wrought into the constitution of the believer which makes him or her an Overcomer and brings him or her to the attainment of this power over the enemy and his hosts? What is it? The root of all is the will of God. The battle of the ages has ever had as its main issue the will of God. That little phrase, one of the commonest phrases amongst Christians, "Thy will be done" is the focal point of the battle of the ages; of all the forces of heaven and hell; they are concentrated upon the issues of that, "Thy will be done." The ages converge upon that, that is the issue between heaven and hell in the battle that has raged all the way through, and when you add the clause, "In earth as in heaven," you have set the stage, the place where that issue is settled. This earth becomes the stage upon which there is wrought out that issue of the will of God, and therein of course, is the explanation of the incarnation of God in Christ. Now we are able to gather that up into several concrete factors which we have to recognize. One is this: the fact of the presence of a will which is not subject to God's will, and *that* in us.

Now you all agree to that and accept that. It is almost commonplace, it does not need a great deal of emphasis, it would in certain realms, but not with us. The man who does not believe in "the fall" would not accept that, but here I think we can take it for granted that we universally agree that there is a will in us which is not subject to the will of God, by nature. We are all too frequently made alive to that fact. But why does one say such an obvious thing here? Because you and I often forget it, and we are surprised when we come up against it, and are very disconcerted sometimes because of it. We find even these consecrated lives, these lives which we have declared as wholly the Lord's, ourselves as being all for God, about which we would unhesitatingly say we have no wish whatever but that the Lord should have all His way in us, even we from time to time have the most terrific conflicts, and all because of that other will. The surprise to us of the thing! We who thought we were all for the Lord are surprised from time to time that we have a bad time because things do not go just as we thought they ought to go, as we wanted them to go, as we prayed they should go, for the Lord's interests; ostensibly for the Lord's interests. As far as we knew our own hearts, we believed in our absolute sincerity that it was for the Lord, and yet we have bad times in that realm. Now we have got to settle it beloved, that there remains another will in the flesh which is not God's will, in nature, and which is not subject to the will of God in itself. There is another will, there is the will of the flesh, there is the will of nature, and I do not understand any of the teaching of God's Word about progressive sanctification unless I admit of that.

The next thing we have to recognize is the dealings with us by God to bring us to be governed inwardly by the Divine will; and then the third thing is that the Lord Jesus has perfected the will of God in Himself once for all, and has given the Holy Spirit to them that believe, to inenergize toward that position in us. That is, of course, the positive side, which is the most encouraging. "It is God Who worketh (*energizeth*) in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13.

The Will of God Deeper than Doctrines, Phraseology, or Attitudes

Let us go over that ground a little more carefully. The first, the presence of another will in this universe and in us by nature. Now beloved, this is not merely a mental or conscious attitude. I suppose there is not one of us who would not say, if we were asked, that we were wholly devoted to the will of God, that we wholly wanted the will of God, that we were wholly on the side of God's will. As to attitude and present consciousness we stand — we should say we stand — in the will of God and for the will of God. Our strongest affirmations are of that character. And yet the strange thing is that, while in all sincerity we may affirm our position in this matter, we may at the same time be full of prejudices, preferences, personal interests, strong-minded, holding or seeking to hold things to our own liking or desire. We may be gripped and held imprisoned by traditional systems and common acceptances. This is not a matter of just our conscious attitude or our consciousness at all. The Will of God is a truth deeper than consciousness and deeper than our present attitude. We may take that attitude this moment in relation to what we call the Will of God, and in half an hour's time, or perhaps tomorrow we may be tested very severely on a point in the Divine Will and our attitude may change and we discover that it was not a question of attitude at all but something deeper; it was not a matter of our consciousness, it was deeper than that.

We never know how strong our will is until God puts us into situations where we behave as we never thought we should behave, where we betray ourselves because of the Lord's dealings with us. We have a controversy with the Lord, where the prevailing test of all is the will of God, where up to that time we have been saying, "Of course, all the will of God." Ah, but that was on the surface and we did not know what was involved, something deeper down; this other will would rise in our very nature, and in so far as that is true, we are in

weakness and the enemy has got his ground, the ground to defeat us, the ground to hold power over us. And that is what I mean by this being a matter of something wrought into our constitution, not something we adopt as a mental attitude. And so we want the will of God, not something we believe about ourselves, not something which today — when things are not quite so difficult — we have as our consciousness towards God and His will, but something which is right beyond the reach of changing attitudes, something deep down. We have come to a place where it is so and changing conditions cannot shake that thing because it has been wrought into our constitution: the will of God wrought in us and becoming our nature. We have become partakers of the Divine nature. It is a matter of nature, beloved, not of attitude, not of temporary consciousness in acceptance of truth; it is a matter of nature, new nature. We must recognize that. Until that is done we have no power over the enemy.

You see what I mean by taking up attitudes towards the enemy on the basis of doctrine and thinking we have ascendancy. It does not work. It is this Overcomer company being put to the test through the fire and having the will of God wrought into their very constitution. On that basis we are overcomers. You see where it comes in in Revelation 12. It comes in in the blood. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." What does that mean? Why "He poured out His soul unto death." When? How? "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine." "The hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified... except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit... He that loveth his life shall lose it." Do you see in the pouring out of His blood, His soul life in the blood unto death, it was His utter acceptance of the Divine will and that blood poured out registers the triumph of God's will, and that blood has been taken by Him into the presence of God as a testimony to a will perfected. Now "they loved not their souls unto death." The "word of their testimony" led them far on the ground of His blood. The principles are all patent; that the overcomers — though not with the same universal redemptive effect but with the same issue over the enemy — the overcomers come along the line of the will of God as perfected in Jesus Christ. The blood represents God's will perfected in the first and supreme Overcomer, the Lord Jesus, and by the word of our testimony we stand on the ground of that blood testifying to the blood which has overcome the other will in the will of God. That is the word of our testimony; not doctrine, but the thing wrought in experience.

"They loved not their souls." The doctrine is made good, the testimony is established through the trial, and an erect dragon standing to swallow us up is a good enough test as to whether we will stand for the will of God or not. This is a very practical thing. It goes deeper than attitudes, doctrine, consciousness; it is something wrought into us that makes us Overcomers, and that something is the will of God becoming constituted in our very make-up so that gradually we emerge from battles over the will of God and come to the place — not of passive resignedness — but of positive standing for God's will. There the power of the strong fleshly will is broken, which is the Satanic will which has been put into our very nature by the sin of Adam.

The Will of God Wrought in us Through Suffering

The second thing; God's practical dealings with us to bring us to be governed inwardly by that will. This is the explanation of all our temptations, all our trials, the seeming contradictions that come even from the Lord Himself. I say "seeming contradictions." Very often we find ourselves in a position where it looks as though even the Lord contradicts Himself. The Abraham trials: God promised a son, and then said that in that son — which it has taken a miracle to bring into being — everything in the Divine promise and covenant was bound up. Then the Lord said go and slay him and offer him a burnt offering — a burnt offering, there is nothing left. The Lord seems to be turning round on Himself sometimes

and contradicting Himself. The seeming contradictions, the Divine delays, the disappointments, the set-backs; all these things find out our will. These are not the ordinary common-place experiences. I am talking about the spiritual experiences of the Lord's children who are, so far as they understand their own hearts, sincerely devoted to the will of God, and yet we all are passed through this course of testing where we come up against severe temptations and trials, contradictions, delays, disappointments, set-backs, and all this sort of thing, and they find us out.

The Lord knows us better than we know ourselves, and "the heart is deceitful above all things." The Lord knows we may be sincere in our own eyes, but He knows just how much we would like that, how much *that* is a secret appeal to what we would like, we would take; how there is that to which we would not open our eyes wide, we keep them half closed and say if only that comes about how delightful! There is something after all that we would wish, that we would desire; just that half or three parts element of self-gratification. We would not admit it, we hardly recognize it, and yet we find our own soul responds to it. Beloved, you may say this is analyzing very closely and making things difficult, but we have to get right down to the truth of things. There is something there which weakens the ground for God, and it is a tremendous triumph over the enemy when a child of God can come to the place where the greatest hopes and most cherished desires and ambitions are handed up to the Lord and are as dead in the acceptance of what the Lord may desire. If there is any personal, fleshly — I do not mean gross, I mean natural fleshly — ambition preference, like, will, in any direction, if there is that, you may settle it once and for all that that is the ground of confusion. You will not get clear guidance from the Lord if there is mixture of the will of God with the will of the flesh. The Lord cannot guide us clearly if we have personal desire in the matter; if we have a little bit of personal strength moving; if our soul comes in, whether it be the reasoning or affectional soul or the volitional soul, the choosing soul; it is *our* soul-life. If that comes in one little bit we have no ground of clear guidance from the Lord. We have to stand back and say, not as I desire, will, or think, but absolutely as God wills. We have to get to the place where, by the grace of God, we can truly occupy the position that it does not matter to us personally so long as the Lord gets what He is after. Believe me, beloved, then you have provided a ground for clear guidance; but if there is strength of soul life as such getting into any question or issue, it brings about confusion and we shall simply get contrary guidances and not a clear way with the Lord. It is a ground of weakness, we cannot stand up, we cannot meet the situation, we are weak, and therefore it is the ground of defeat, a ground of the power of Satan.

The Ground of Satan's Strength

Satan's power is maintained not merely by what he is in himself but by the ground that he has in man, he must have a ground, a judicial ground of his own somewhere, upon which to operate. The Lord Jesus was able to overcome because He could say "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." We are defeated on that ground, our defeat takes place on the ground of our own strong will. Yes, often that which we color and dress up as being desired for the Lord. We never know whether our protestations that it is for the Lord are really genuine until submitted to a severe test. We have said, "All the Lord's will in that," and the Lord has put us in something pretty hot, and we come back and say "this is exacting more than I thought it would, this is finding me out: I was a bit rash...." You invoke the challenge of God when you take that position. You see, the Overcomer must come to the position where there is wrought into him or her this will of God as a part of their constitution through testing, trials, adversities; where they come to the place where nothing is worth while but the will of God. It is a great thing to find yourself eventually experimentally and positionally where you once were doctrinally, and sometimes it is a long and trying and terrible journey from where we say, "Yes, all the will of God," until you get

there. We are not there by saying it, we are there by a thing wrought in us. There must then finally be a letting-go to the Lord. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, because there is that of this creation which must be cast off. The motive may be good, the sincerity may be all right, but there are personal things bound up with it: desires, ambitions, things which would give us much pleasure. There is this secret mixture of ourselves, and although the Lord is going to save something — there is something very precious for Himself — He has to put the whole thing down into death that in death it shall be stripped of every bit of personal, natural soul interest and raise in resurrection a thing which is wholly of Himself — and then you get the enlargement — the Son of Man glorified.

I will close, reminding you of the third thing. While we stand face to face with the severity of this thing (it is a tremendous thing when you are coming through it and having the will of God wrought into you and all things are being brought to death) it is blessed to remember that the will of God has already been perfected in Christ and He has in Himself secured our perfection in the will of God. Read again Hebrews 10:10 "By which will we have been sanctified..." Perfected forever by the will of God done in Christ. "I come to do Thy will, O God." "By which will we have been sanctified." He has done it, He has secured it, and He has secured our perfection in God in Himself and now, on the ground that something has been done, a living, standing reality, a fact to which nothing can be added, He has sent the Holy Spirit to enter into us who receive Him, to be in us the inenergizing power of the will of God. God the Holy Spirit working, energizing in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is a blessed thing to get linked up with something that is done. Not a doctrine but a living Person, by a mighty power, the Holy Spirit, God Himself working in towards something He has achieved. It is not enough to take hold of that as doctrine. We have to take hold in a practical way. On the one hand, let go to the Lord, and on the other hand reach out strongly and take hold of the energies of the Lord that there shall be a fulfillment in us of the words "It is God Who worketh in you to will and to do..." In the hour when we are challenged, when after all the will of God is not so easy to accept, when we are passing through the test and when we are in our Gethsemane, when the cup is offered to us — then, what is it to be? "O fulfill that word in Philip. 2:13, 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'" Unless He does it we will not go through, but by that inenergizing of God, "strengthened with might by His Spirit into the inner man" we shall become Overcomers, we shall come to the place where Satan is robbed of his ground of power in us because the will of God perfectly done is now a part of our being, we have approximated to that experimentally. I leave these closing words of the Hebrew letter with you, "The God of peace Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in everything to do His will, energizing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight."

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