

The Overcomers in the Plan of God

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The eternal plan of God culminates with the eventual confrontation in the book of Revelation. It is the victory of the Lamb with His *called, chosen, and faithful* servants. Many have called these the "Overcomers."

Revelation 17:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴ These (*those with the beast*) will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him are *called, chosen, and faithful*." *Emphasis mine*

The four gospels record Jesus calling disciples to make them fishers of men, or disciples. If there is strength in the Body of Christ, every part must supply. Let's take a quick look at the fishing occupation to compare with their distinct callings.

Mark 1:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

If we keep in mind our three words, called, chosen, and faithful, we can discover the slight variation in Peter's purpose and the slight variation of John's.

Mark 1:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸ They (*Simon and Andrew*) immediately *left their nets* and followed Him. ¹⁹ When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat *mending their nets*. *Emphasis mine*

Both Apostles were faithful in their calling, with Peter having a primary role of unlocking the Kingdom of God for the Jews on the day of Pentecost and later the Gentiles represented by Cornelius.

When James and John were called by the Lord, they were in a boat, *mending their nets*. John's gospel, written around A.D. 90 is considered to be a real mender. The destruction of Jerusalem had occurred in A.D. 70 and mending the rents in the church was probably desperately needed.

John presenting Jesus as the Son of God as life to man was a mending gospel. John starts at the beginning of creation, continues with his three Epistles, and ends with the unveiling of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. John shows us at the end of chapter two, how Jesus does not commit Himself to anyone.

Vision and Transformation

John 2:23-25 (ESV) ²³ Now when he (*Jesus*) was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs that He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for *He Himself knew what was in man. Emphasis mine*

Jesus sees the intent of the hearts of those who believed in Him only because they saw the signs. Many believers may fall in this category because of what Jesus has done for them, and serve Him because of their feelings in their heart.

The church as a whole sees Christ Jesus as the King of kings in the Gospel of Matthew; the Perfect Servant of God in Mark, and Jesus as the Son of Man, the Second Adam in Luke with His genealogy tracing back to Adam. John now brings us Jesus, as the Son of God, the Word of God manifested in the flesh as the God-Man.

Therefore, signs are not enough; it is only by having the Spirit of Life that one can hope to be faithful. But there is something else that was unique about the transition from John chapter two that is often overlooked. The **ESV** and the **NASB** pick up the transition by adding “Now” to the beginning of **John 3:1**.

John 3:1 (ESV) ¹ *Now* there was a man of the Pharisees named *Nicodemus*, a ruler of the Jews. *Emphasis mine*

Now, *or But*, indicates that in this case, concerning Nicodemus, it differs from those in the verses of **John 2:23-25**. The others believed in the Lord because they saw the miracles He performed. The Lord could not commit Himself to such people. But the case in this chapter concerns life in regeneration; it reveals that this book is not for miraculous things, but is only for *LIFE* through the signs.

We are not implying that people who only believe and serve the Lord because of miracles and benefits are nominal, i.e., *pretending* Christians; on the contrary.

What we do notice is that Nicodemus is drawn to Jesus because God the Father draws him.

John 6:65 (NKJV) ⁶⁵ And He (*Jesus*) said, "**Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.**"

The main question is why? This Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, is called and chosen by God to meet with the Son of God. For me, it is the distinguishing factor of what an overcomer is, versus a regular believer.

Nicodemus' name means "victorious among his people," which means that although he is in a ruling-class position, he does not lord it over people. This characteristic becomes important because Jesus later tells Apostle John that He hated those who thought they were "*victorious over the people.*" They were called the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans practice the laity system which has an intermediary between God and man. These are those who consider and esteem themselves higher than common believers.

Revelation 2:6 (NKJV) ⁶ **But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

The atmosphere in the present-day Body of Christ feels like Jesus' Gethsemane experience. The goal of course is not the Cross, but another type of agony.

Matthew 26:38 (NKJV) ³⁸ Then He said to them, "**My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.**"

The atmosphere *is not* one of great sorrow because of the expectation of the end of age. It *is not* the "oil press" of the agony that the world must go through before Christ's return. *It is* all the unnecessary animosity within the Body of Christ, and we can literally hear Jesus saying these words in our spirit.

Matthew 26:40-41 (NKJV) ⁴⁰ Then He (*Jesus*) came to the disciples (*the church*) and found them asleep, and said to Peter (*a piece of the Rock*), "**What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?** ⁴¹ **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**" *Emphasis mine*

It appears that Moses knew in advance as well with his prayer.

Psalm 90:2-4 (NKJV) ² Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God. ³ You turn man to destruction, And say, "***Return, O children of men.***" ⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night.

A thousand years in the sight of God is like yesterday and, as some say, as one day. The Tempter has been allowed to frustrate the Body of Church, but Jesus warns the inner circle, i.e., those that are chosen to be closest to Him, to watch and pray. Yes, we have been entering into temptation for over two thousand years. Do not grow weary of trying to pass the torch to others to watch and pray.

It is a sovereign design that God knew and prepared for. Our goal is to look at God's plan with the use of "*The Overcomers.*"

Who is an Overcomer?

An overcomer to some means overcoming the penalty of sin, which simply means escaping the second death, or the Lake of Fire, eternally. Grace through faith is a gift. It is to accept what the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome by His death on the Cross. Revelation gives us the best understanding of the meaning of the *Overcomer* in its practical use. The audience is to believers in different church locales.

Revelation 2:7 (NKJV) ⁷ He who has "***an ear,***" let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who "***overcomes***" I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. *Emphasis mine*

Revelation 2:7b (ESV) To the one ***who conquers***

Revelation 2:7 (HCSB) I will give ***the victor***

Overcome, by definition, means to subdue, conquer, prevail, and get the victory.

All believers have ears to hear, but do not listen and take heed, therefore, cannot conquer being ignored, and struggle with self-esteem.

Most commentaries reference **1 John 5:4-5** as justification that every believer is considered an overcomer in the book of Revelation.

1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Once again, John is writing to believers with line upon line steps of walking by faith. Believers are:

1. Born of God with the divine LIFE
2. And with the *capacity* of the divine life, the regenerated believer *can* overcome the *power that is in the world*, but some do not.
3. ***Not loving the world is the ground for overcoming the evil one.*** Loving the world just a little gives the evil one the ground to defeat our testimony.
4. With ***the faith of the Son of God***, we are enabled to overcome the Satan-organized world. *Does every believer walk after the Spirit? Or after the flesh?*
5. He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God has the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, to empower him to live a life that practices the truth, does the will of God, lives the righteousness of God, and walks in the love of God for His expression. It is the Son of God who is the express love of God in us by faith *that we should walk*.

1 John 5:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and ***this life is in His Son.*** *Emphasis mine*

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV) ⁷ But *we have* this treasure in earthen vessels, ***that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*** *Emphasis mine*

From Genesis through Revelation, man has the tendency to stray from God's eternal plan, but the greatest news for us is that God is God, and He changes not. It is always good to notice the wording in the Word of God and what it says, plus the volume of knowledge that is revealed in a single verse.

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV) ⁶ "For I *am* the ***LORD***, I do not change; Therefore, you are not consumed, ***O sons of Jacob.*** *Emphasis mine*

YHWH or LORD is considered to be a personal name for God, and it encompasses the full Trinity, *at least in my mind*. God is addressing the descendants of Jacob, which speaks a lot about God's sovereign knowledge of His chosen people to bring forth the Savior of the world.

The Holy Spirit wanted us to know that this is a work in progress. God could have directed Malachi to record, *O sons of Israel*. But Jacob was a work in progress until the time came when God changed his name to Israel. *Not perfected, but divinely purposeful for God, to be faithful to the end.*

Therefore, as far as God is concerned, the Body of Christ should take heed to all that is written about His eternal plan.

“God conceived an eternal plan even before the foundation of the world. His plan serves the dual purpose of:

- (1) having all things **to manifest Christ**, and*
- (2) making man to be like Christ – which is to say, for man to have **the life and glory of Christ**.*

In realizing His dual aim, however, God encounters two problems: (1) the rebellion of Satan, and (2) the fall of man.” Watchman Nee

Israel, the called and chosen nation, was not faithful. God understood this from the beginning, and He always knew that within the fallen nation, there are those called the overcomers among them.

In **Malachi 3:16-18**, YHWH (LORD) of Israel is about to go silent for 400 years because the majority of the nation has some worship issues. However, the best news is what God says next.

Malachi 3:16-18 (HCSB) ¹⁶ At that time *those who feared the LORD* spoke to one another. The **LORD took notice** and listened. So, a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared Yahweh and had high regard for His name. ¹⁷ *“They will be Mine,”* says the LORD of Hosts, “a special possession on the day I am preparing. I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him. ¹⁸ *So you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked*, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. *Emphasis mine*

The Israel connection should always be seen in view of God’s eternal plan, as it was in the mind of the Apostle Paul.

Ephesians 4:10-13 (HCSB) ¹⁰ The One who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, *that He might fill all things*. ¹¹ And He

personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, **to build up the body of Christ**, ¹³ until we all reach **unity** in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, **[growing/into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness]**. *Emphasis mine*

In the process, God wanted us and the world to see the difference between the righteous and the wicked. However, that is on the large scale. The Holy Spirit's commission is that we see the difference in the person in the mirror. The transformation from the "old man" to the "New Man." The new man should be dominant, or led by the Spirit, and that in itself is a process.

The Scribes and Pharisees taught us that it is not teaching and being religious that proclaims the righteousness of God, but even among them God had a remnant, such as Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and even Gamaliel. When we are stiff-necked, we should listen when God speaks to us at the right time concerning things we do not immediately understand.

Acts 5:34-35 (NKJV) ³⁴ Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them: "Men of Israel, **take heed to yourselves** what you intend to do regarding these men." *Emphasis mine*

We see from Malachi that God will take notice of the separation. Our quest to understand it fully also teaches us about ourselves. To be faithful is stewardship that we are called and chosen to do. The faith of the beloved Son gives us the power to be diligent with all perseverance, with the intent of the heart testifying that it is "not I, but Christ."

As Malachi prophesied to the nation of Israel, and whatever affects Israel affects the world. Oswald Chambers, July 21st in *My Utmost for His Highest*, has a lot of pearls in it. This pearl is about the gateway to the kingdom.

The Gateway to the Kingdom

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:3

Beware of placing Our Lord as a Teacher first. If Jesus Christ is a Teacher only,

then all He can do is to tantalize me by erecting a standard I cannot attain. What is the use of presenting me with an ideal I cannot possibly come near? I am happier without knowing it. What is the good of telling me to be what I never can be - to be pure in heart, to do more than my duty, to be perfectly devoted to God?

I must know Jesus Christ as Savior before His teaching has any meaning for me other than that of an ideal which leads to despair. But when I am born again, of the Spirit of God, I know that Jesus Christ did not come to teach only: He came to make me what He teaches I should be.

The Redemption means that Jesus Christ can put into any man the disposition that ruled His own life, and all the standards God gives are based on that disposition.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the natural man - *the very thing Jesus means it to do*. As long as we have a self-righteous, conceited notion that we can carry out Our Lord's teaching, God will allow us to go on until we break our ignorance over some obstacle; then we are willing to come to Him as paupers and receive from Him. *"Blessed are the paupers in spirit," that is the first principle in the Kingdom of God.*

The bedrock in Jesus Christ's kingdom is poverty, not possession; not decisions for Jesus Christ, but a sense of absolute futility - *I cannot begin to do it*.

Then Jesus says - Blessed are you. That is the entrance, and *it does take us a long while to believe we are poor!* The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the moral frontier where Jesus Christ works. *Emphasis mine*

Christ Has Preeminence in the Life of A Christian

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (HCSB) ¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died. ¹⁵ And He died for all *so that those who live should no longer live for themselves*, but for the One who died for them and was raised. *Emphasis mine*

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Colossians 3:4 (NKJV) ⁴ When *Christ who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. *Emphasis mine*

The life of a Christian is Christ. *There is a distinction between Christ as our life and Christ as our power.*

How do we overcome?

How can we be holy?

What do we believe?

- (1) Many people think that if they can deal with their temper and are able to be freed from sundry sins, they have the victory and are holy.
- (2) Some imagine that if they are patient, humble, and gentle, they are victorious and holy.
- (3) Some believe that by reading the Bible and praying more, by being careful in continuing in the Lord and thus being strengthened, they will have the victory and such conduct will result in holiness.
- (4) Some conceive the idea of putting self and the flesh to death as the means to victory and holiness.
- (5) Some people, recognizing that power is in Christ and that our flesh has been crucified, therefore believe that they must by faith draw on His power to overcome and to be holy.

All these five assumptions *may be* wrong. The fifth may seem to be right, yet it might be misleading. There appears to be just one answer.

- (6) **CHRIST IS OUR LIFE.** This alone is victory! This way alone is holiness! Victorious life, holy life, perfect life is Christ himself! From start to finish, it is Christ. Outside of Him, we have nothing at all.

Christ must have the preeminence in all things! The victorious life which God has given us is not a thing, neither is it patience or gentleness, but it is the living Christ. Christ never comes to supplement our deficiency. What we lack is not patience, but a living Person.

God will never, as it were, take a piece of cloth from Christ to mend our rent. The lack of patience speaks of the lack of Christ. Instead, God intends to let Christ have the preeminence in all things. Putting self to death is not holiness. Holiness is Christ. Christ himself must have the first place in all things!

Should God give us power, it will only make us powerful persons instead of Christ having the preeminence in our lives. But with Christ as our power, He has the first place in us. The reason why we do not have power is that we are not weak enough. For the power of Christ "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). It is not Christ making me powerful; it is Christ being power unto me!

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV) ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that *the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
Emphasis mine

Sometimes I like to use the expression, "Me, Myself, and I." Me is the body that others see. Myself is the soul and the expression of all that is in the mind, will, and emotion. The I, of course, is the spirit that should align to Paul's declaration, "Not I, but Christ." Therefore, if the power of Christ is to rest upon me, it must be subject to the Spirit flowing from the I (*born of the Spirit*).

Hudson Taylor saw the truth of the matter in the phrase, "ye are the branches."

John 15:5 (NKJV) ⁵ *I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

Not drawing on the power of Christ to help me live, *but letting Christ himself live in me!* Christ lives out patience, gentleness, and love through us. What do we deserve but death? We are not fit for anything but death. When God created Adam, He gave him a command to keep. Yet God does not re-create us in the same fashion. He instead puts us in the place of death while He himself lives out His will in us.

We should not only see that there is a Savior who died in our stead on Calvary, but even more so realize that this same One lives in us and for us now. He is made by God to be "our wisdom": to be both our "righteousness" for the past that we might be saved, our "sanctification" for the present that we might live a

holy life, and our “redemption” for the future that our body might be redeemed. Thus, He indeed has the preeminence in all things!

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 (HCSB) ³⁰ But [it is] from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became God-given wisdom for us — [our] righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written: The one who boasts must boast in the Lord.

God Looks for Overcomers

Now whenever the church fails, God finds a few in the church — called to be overcomers — that they might bear the responsibility which the church as a whole ought to but fails to bear. He chooses a company of the faithful few to represent the church in the demonstration of the victory of Christ. He has His overcomers in all the seven periods of the church (as represented by the seven churches described in Revelation chapters 2 and 3). This overcomer line is never cut. The overcomers are not some special classes. They are simply a group of people who conform to the original plan of God.

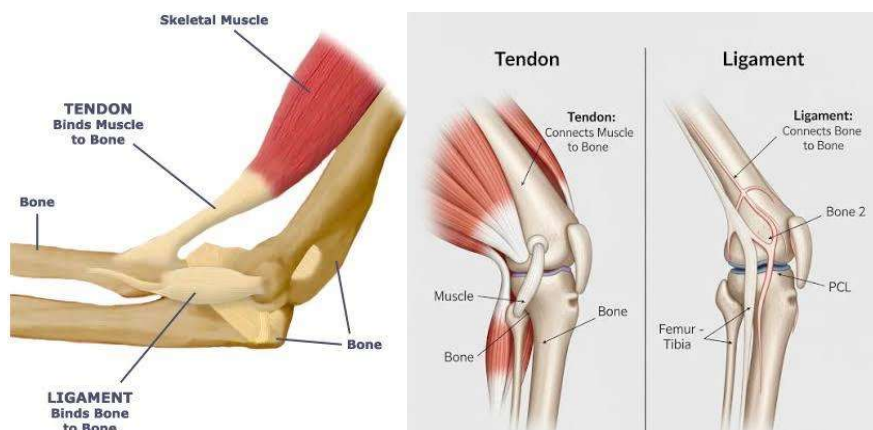
The Principle of Overcomers

The way God works, as illustrated in His Holy Scriptures, is to find a few as a nucleus in order to reach the many. This was true in the patriarch age. At that time God chose people individually: those such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham.

Later on, through Abraham (the few), God reaches the whole nation of Israel (the many) — that is to say, God reaches the dispensation of the law through the patriarch age. Then from the dispensation of the law (the nation of Israel) God reaches to the dispensation of grace (the church out of all nations); and likewise, from the dispensation of grace, He will reach to the dispensation of the kingdom (the entire world), and from the dispensation of the kingdom to the new heaven and the new earth (the new creation), for the kingdom is the prologue to the new heaven and the new earth. So then, the principle of God’s operation is from the few to the many.

Colossians 2:19 (HCSB) ¹⁹ He doesn’t hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, develops with growth from God.

“ . . . the Head – Christ Jesus, from whom all the body, being *supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.*” The joints are for supplying, while the bands are for knitting. The Head holds the body together through these joints and bands. And *these joints and bands are the overcomers.*



In examining the principle of the overcomers, we must notice two things:

- (1) that whenever the whole body fails, God will choose relatively few to stand for the whole body; and
- (2) that God calls these few to carry out His command so that through them He may later reach the many.
- (3) That which supplies the LIFE of the Body is the blood that is made in the marrow of the bones.

John 1:4-5 (HCSB) ⁴Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it.

Whew! Those are the words that came to my mind to conclude Part I. Naturally, I always like to be reminded that Jesus is coming soon. *Watch and Pray!*

Revelation 22:20 (NKJV) ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, *"Surely I am coming quickly."*

AMEN. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!