

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

PO Box 571 - Priest River, ID 83856 * www.gentleshepherd.com * June 2012

SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

Part 11

Experiencing the Christian Life

By Rayola Kelley

A. W. Tozer made reference to how Christians' formal creed may be sound, but the breakdown is in their working creed. In other words, they may have a sound understanding of what they believe, but it never becomes practical because they fail to experience and live the Christian life. Creeds that are not put into practice will have no realistic value to them. They may sound right, wonderful, and glorious, but if they never impact our lives through practice and obedience, they become dead letter. In essence, they will never revolutionize our inner man, transform our mind, change who we are, or influence us in who we need to become. They will simply become stagnant in the useless pool of complacency and religious mediocrity, causing leanness to our spirits.

When I think of, or encounter, this state in a Christian, I am reminded of the detour I took in my initial years as a believer. I got caught up with obtaining knowledge about Jesus, but failed to come to know Him. I ended up with a nice concept of Jesus, but it was elevated by conceit. I may have sounded somewhat intelligent about Him, but it was judgmental and lacked heart and dimension. My understanding may have been sound and religious, but it was not alive. I am sure that it became clear to many that I knew of Jesus, but I did not have a personal revelation of Him. Subsequently, I found myself bluffing my way through my Christian life. Outwardly, I wore a religious robe, but lacked the power to walk the walk. There were blaring inconsistencies in my life that I tried to remedy with outward piousness and religious activities. The truth is

that when I was being transparent with myself, I sensed that there was something missing. Later, I learned I had an intellectual understanding of the Written Word, the Bible, but I lacked the real heart revelation of the Living Word, Jesus.



The Bible talks about knowledge that simply puffs a person up in his or her personal understanding of a matter, but he or she will ultimately fail to possess the proper knowledge concerning it (*1 Corinthians 8:1-2*). However, the Apostle Peter tells us that godly knowledge must be disciplined by virtue and temperance (*2 Peter 1:5-6*). There must be spiritual character present in order to come to a fruitful knowledge of Jesus Christ. It must also be tempered by other godly virtues if it is going to have the right impact on the person we are to be. The Apostle Peter best described the condition that lacks such characteristics in its knowledge of the Lord by calling it barren and unfruitful. (*See 2 Peter 1:5-8.*)

The crux of the matter is that our pursuit when it comes to spiritual truths must always lead us back to the Truth, Jesus Christ. We must come out with more of an awareness of who He is, rather than an awareness of what we think we know or what we think we have learned about Him. Knowledge without the right Spirit is lifeless, knowledge that is never tested will lack authority and credibility, and knowledge that is not walked out will be void of wisdom, ultimately proving to be foolish and useless.

This deduction of knowledge in its different forms brings me to the matter of spiritual survival. We will not survive the great wave of delusion sweeping across the landscape of the world if we are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He must not simply be a concept, He must be our reality. Our understanding of Him must not solely consist of intellectual knowledge;

rather, we must have a heart revelation of Him. He must not be a doctrine; rather, He must become the Living Word. He must not be reduced to a theory, cleverly placed in the midst of our endless theology, religious formulas, and ritualistic practices; rather, He must become our all in all as we pursue His perspective, way, and will in all matters. In essence, we must strive to experience the fullness of Christ to possess the means to survive the end-day darkness enfolding the souls of men.

What most people fail to realize is that the grave darkness consuming the world around us is a test to God's people. The test is simple enough. The darkness will reveal if we love the truth or not (*2 Thessalonians 2:10-12*). The reality is we all like to have life on our terms, but life will never bow down to our way of thinking. We must not only connect to the light of God, but we must walk in it to experience the fullness of His wisdom, protection, and guidance.

The question is how do we connect to the light of God's reality? I realize that I have written on this subject many times, but you cannot talk about experiencing the life of Christ in the midst of great darkness without dealing with this Christian virtue. It is called faith.

The erroneous concept about faith is that some try to use it to change their personal reality. The truth is that we choose the way of faith to face reality for what it is so we can stand in the confidence of who our God is. The test of faith shows us where our confidence rests. Is it in what God can do, in our idea of God, or is it in the unchangeable character of God? There are those whose confidence is in what God can do. However, when God fails to perform the way they think He should, they become angry and skeptical. If people's confidence is in their idea of God, it simply means that they have faith in an image of God. When the image is shattered by reality, they become despairing and disillusioned with the whole religious scene. They often fall into utter unbelief.

We are to have faith toward the true God of heaven (*Hebrews 6:1-2*). Genuine faith gives us that solid steadfastness to stand when all seems hopeless, to withstand when the battle threatens to consume us, and continue to stand when all seems lost. It is what connects us to the hope and promises of heaven. Granted, we may not see such hope and promises realized today or tomorrow, but we can stand in confidence that we will see their fruition in the near future.

It is for this reason that we are to walk by faith in who God is and not according to our understanding of a matter (*2 Corinthians 5:7*). Faith has to do with walking according to the unseen reality of God. It is based on what is known and confirmed by the Word of God and walks according to the expectation that everything God has said will come to completion.

This brings me to what I call the "Amen Factor." The word "amen" is a good way to describe the active confidence that is associated with what it means to "believe". Believe entails an intellectual understanding, an actual expression of obedience by a devoted, consecrated soul, and an abiding confidence that resonates in the corridors of the spirit. It is settled by assurance, activated due to persuasion, and steadfast because of that which is trustworthy and faithful.

There are three points to the "amen factor", and three aspects of what it means to believe. As you consider the points of standing sure according to the declarations of "amen" and being steadfast because of the aspects of what it means to believe, you realize there is a graduation that brings dimension to our Christian walk.

"Amen" deals with the element of truth. It declares that something is ordained as truth; therefore, it will embrace it as so, for there is an assurance that it will be confirmed and established as being such in the end. It is clear that "amen" puts a period at the end of a sentence, declaration, or thought, ending all debate or speculation about something. It is the muscles in faith towards God that will actually walk according to what has been established as being trustwor-

thy and right. "Amen" in a sense connects the reality of something to the very way, will, and plan of God in a matter and chooses to believe it as so.

Let us now consider the progression of the "amen factor" with the graduation of what I refer to as the "belief factor". This combination will become the motivation, strength, and inspiration behind the walk of faith. The Bible talks about believing upon Christ. Such belief is able to declare "amen" about all that has been said. For this reason, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (*Romans 10:17*). This intellectual acceptance certainly puts all of our confidence upon what we understand about Christ. For some Christians it remains simply an intellectual understanding about the things of God. However, believing must always graduate to active faith. It is not meant to remain in the arena of knowledge. It must become living revelation of that which is unseen, alive, and eternal.

Revelation points to knowledge that comes to the end of itself, as it succumbs to the cloud of confusion and ceases to have confidence in its present understanding. However, out of this abyss of uncertainty, a small beam of light of understanding begins to emerge like a phoenix rising from the ashes to take on the glorious form of heavenly wisdom. At this point, the veil over the spiritual eyes begins to part to reveal the heavenly view of a matter. It is as heavenly wisdom takes form that the revelation reveals the glorious depth of the essence of all wisdom, Jesus, leading to defining His righteous ways, as the revelation points to the work of sanctification and promises the fullness of redemption.

This brings us to the second part of this progression. Believing upon Jesus must graduate to believing Him. We can always believe upon what Jesus has said or done, but if we do not believe Him, we can begin to pick and choose what we believe. What Jesus says is backed up by who He is. This brings us to the second point of the "amen factor"

"Amen" can declare that something is true, but if it does not progress to the reality that it is absolute because it is right and nothing will change it, it will not be so. In other words, "Amen, so be it." Faith is based on the abso-

lutes of God. He never changes and what He does do is in line with His character. Therefore, everything He says and does is true, right, and holy. In light of God, everything is "amen" because we can trust it to come to fruition in due time. We can know that if something originates with God, we can declare with confidence, "So be it for it is right."

When we come to the idea that something must be because it is right according to the Lord, we can walk in confidence towards the fruition of it. Such a walk entails obedience to what we know is true. This type of active faith is counted as righteousness to us. It is the "so be it" in believing that will cause much advancement in our faith walk. We will want to be in the current of that which flows with the ways of God. Due to active faith, we do not want to simply be spectators of what is to be, we will want to part of the movement of God in the matter of His kingdom to experience His presence and witness His glory in what will be.

This brings us to the third aspect of the "amen factor" and the "belief factor". In the initial aspect of believing, it embraces a limited knowledge of Jesus and His work, but in the progression of believing, it walks out the truth of what it understands. In other words, it walks out the creed it now embraces because it is so, producing spiritual growth. The "amen factor" is "Amen, so be it, for it is so." The "belief factor" is I believe it because I believe Him; therefore, I believe in all that He has said and done. There is no addition or subtraction when it comes to what the Bible declares about Jesus. It is "amen", for it is so. What has been declared in heaven will be carried forth on earth. In other words, it is a done deal. Even though we might not have seen the fruition of something, if God has declared it, it is as good as done. As a result, I choose to believe it and walk according to its light as I walk in its revelation.

Admittedly, through the years I have struggled in my Christian life because my faith was limited by my unbelief and disobedience towards a matter. Granted, I may have believed intellectually the truths of God, but my failure to walk them out revealed that I really did not believe after all. I may

Continued, Pg. 5, Column 3

THE RED DOOR

By Jeannette Haley

As some of you know, the house in which we now live on the Priest River has a beautiful red door in the living room. To me, this is not just any old ordinary door. It is beautiful with it's panel of decorative cut glass, and even though scenes of beauty can be dimly viewed through the windows, the red door hints of something that needs to be experienced on the other side. Sometimes, unexpectedly, I feel a tug in my spirit, an invitation if you will, to open the door, and step through it. I place one hand on the ornate handle, and unlock the bolt with the other. Then, in one small step I find myself outside on the deck, quietly closing the red door behind me as if any sound on my part might disturb the hushed tones of the Spirit within my own soul.



This secret tryst with God is deeply personal. One could almost say that it is a few sacred moments, stolen out of the regulated time of a too busy life. Stepping through that door brings an instant change from a small, but comfortable, indoor space, filled with man-made things into a world where God's creation surrounds and embraces all of your senses in one breathtaking moment. The overwhelming feeling of awe, peace, power and majesty instantly flows through my spirit, lifting my soul up into a chorus of silent praise.

The red door stands between two worlds. One world, the "inside world," is within the confines of a man-made home which is often dimly lit on cloudy days (and especially so because of the pine wood ceilings). It's a lovely, homey and cozy little house, situated in a gorgeous setting; however, life inside our earthly shelter, is, for the most part, just that—*earthly*. In other words, life basically revolves around normal physical needs such as meal planning, cooking, dishes, laundry, cleaning, other responsibilities that never seem to end, along with a host of interruptions, and what we call "tying up loose ends," or "details."

Once you step through the red door to the "outside world" and close

the door behind you to the "inside world," you are suddenly in a totally different environment. The "inside" responsibilities and problems have been left behind the closed red door, even if for only a few moments, along with computers, televisions, and other distractions. The "inside world" dwarfs in comparison to the "outside world" where the vastness of the sky overhead, the majesty of the towering trees, the sweet music of the Priest River flowing below, and the vocal expressions of winged wildlife fill you with wonder. Fluorescent dragon flies and butterflies go busily about their mysterious pursuits. Breathtaking hues and contrasting colors of plant life are mirrored in the sky-tinted river. Does and fawns may silently pass by, and if the door of your heart is open to the Spirit, you can surely enter into sweet communion with the Lord.

There are many kinds of doors in this world—both physical and spiritual. At this point, allow me to take a little trip into the past. (This is one advantage of growing old!) When I was a little kid, we lived in the north part of Seattle, in a decent neighborhood. Back in those days, everything was made better, and that is a fact. Manufactured in the USA, cars were real metal (instead of what I call paper mache), with real chrome (instead of "silver plastic," made in China). Someone once told me a few years ago that even today's small trucks are "fold up toys." In the "old days" children's toys were made of metal or handcrafted wood, and pretty much unbreakable instead of the cheap plastic stuff kids have today. Everything was made to last from houses, to cars, to appliances, to tools, to clothes and shoes, to you-name-it. This brings me back to doors. One of the things that my dad always insisted on was having solid (as opposed to hollow) wood doors.

I will always remember our heavy, wood front door because it boasted another little "door" that was cute into it. It was high enough that only an adult could open this little door within a door. It was framed in metal, and had a little handle and latch. In my child's eye, it was just plain cute, but totally out of my reach. My mother even gave it a special name. She called it the "Go to hell" door. Nobody ever came through our front door until they had been first

screened through this little door. If those who knocked on our front door were peddling some brand of religion that my mother was opposed to, they got pretty much told where to go through that small opening. I have to admit, I felt safe and secure in our home because of that little door, and in my opinion, I think that a lot of unfortunate people would still be alive today if they still made doors like that.

Other types of doors are dreadful. Rayola and I have experienced the heavy metal clang of prison doors closing and locking behind us when we were involved in prison ministry. They remind me of the gates of hell, and those who are prisoners of sin and Satan, of whom it is written concerning his captives, *"That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners"* Isaiah 14:17. By contrast, Jesus declared, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture"* John 10:7-9. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus told Peter, *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [Christ, the Son of the living God] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Concerning going in and out to find pasture, allow me to quote from the late evangelist, Zelma Kirkpatrick. She wrote, *"As I walk with Christ Jesus, the divine and holy Son of God, and what is most important and wonderful to me, my Saviour; the veil becomes exceedingly thin between the natural and the spiritual worlds. At these times I become greatly conscious of the unseen world about me, until I realize at last that which Jesus meant when he said: 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.' The redeemed are in Christ, indeed, and do not go in and out of Him in order to find our spiritual food. Our life is hid in Christ in God. So it is the spiritual realm into which we enter to find our spiritual pasture, food for the soul; then out into the natural where we live our lives for Him and thus for others."*

Just as the red door in our house is the only door that opens to the deck, it reminds me of the door to eternal life—Jesus Christ. The color red stands for His blood that was shed for our sins, and only His blood can wash us clean. In *John 6* Jesus declared, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: So he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*” (Verses 53-58.) We know that Jesus was not speaking of “eating” Him literally. That would be cannibalism. Jesus was telling the people that through His blood and through His flesh He would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, as the Passover lamb. To “drink” His blood, and “eat” Him is to receive the gift of salvation purchased by His shed blood, and to partake of His life. Only then, by faith, can a person be truly born again. The wine and the unleavened bread of communion symbolize this, and it is never to be taken lightly.

Concerning the blood of Christ, in *Acts 20:28* we read, “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” *Romans 5:8,9* says, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*” It is only His blood that justifies us. There is nothing we can say or do to add to our salvation. There can be no reconciliation with God except through the blood of Christ. *Colossians 1:20* tells us, “*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth,*

or things in heaven.” Are we saved to sit and do nothing, or saved to pursue our own life? Not hardly! When we repent, receive, and believe, and are born again by His Spirit, washed by His blood, then we have entered into a blood covenant with God. We are no longer our own, to live our life on our terms. We are bought with a price. Paul declared, “*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” *Galatians 2:20*. According to *Hebrews 9:14*, “*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*” (Emphasis added.) Peter declared, “*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” *1 Peter 1:18, 19*. “*...without shedding of blood is no remission*” *Hebrews 9:22b*. And, as for Jesus’ flesh, we read, “*By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” *Hebrews 10:10*.

The red door, as mentioned, has a beautiful glass window in it. This glass is beveled and artistically arranged in such a way that you can get tantalizing glimpses and impressions of the beautiful outside world. Yet, it is impossible to see it clearly in its entirety. This reminds me of how on this side of heaven’s door we can receive glimpses of glory, yet we still “see through a glass darkly.” Paul said, “*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*” *1 Corinthians 13:12*. The Apostle John wrote, “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” *1 John 3:2*. We cannot fully know or understand the wonders of heaven while dwelling in these vessels of clay in a fallen, material or physical world. In a

very small way, when I step through the red door, I am sometimes reminded of what it must be like entering through the gates of heaven, leaving earth and all its cares behind. Likewise, when I step through the red door, I can’t bring the “inside” to the “outside.”

God’s Word tells us “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*” *2 Corinthians 2:9*. Therefore, how can people truly believe that heaven is a replica of life on this earthly plane? You often hear people talk about life in heaven as if departed sports heroes were “up there” happily playing sports, or departed musicians and movie stars were “up there” carrying on their particular brand of music or entertainment. I am reminded of a certain church service we attended many years ago where disorder, emotions and the flesh reigned. Over the din a pastor’s wife was heard to say, “This is just like heaven!” I remember thinking, *If this is just like heaven, I’m not sure I’m going to enjoy it.*

Like doors, gates serve as an entrance. Jesus said, “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” *Matthew 13, 14*. “Strait,” according to Strong’s Concordance, means, “to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly: with grief, groan, grudge, sigh.” This gives us a different picture from the one that is commonly assumed of hopping, skipping, and jumping through the gate, skate boarding down the narrow way, and then at the end of it somehow landing in heaven. In order to enter in at the strait gate and stay on the narrow way that leads to life, which, according to Jesus, *few find*, is a grave matter that must be understood in all sobriety and fear. Only those who have seen the depth of their sin and depravity in the light of God’s holiness, and their great need for redemption, cleansing, and salvation understand the agonies involved in entering in at the strait gate. The strait gate represents complete and total repentance, utter consecration,

absolute self-denial, and unmitigated abandonment to God. Jesus said to count the cost.

To "sigh, murmur, pray audibly" with grief and groaning speaks of a sin-sick soul in the throes of unutterable agony under the crushing burden of sin and separation from God. Entering in at the strait gate comes by faith through the washing of the blood as one surrenders all to the Lord Jesus Christ in exchange for His life. Walking thereafter on the narrow road is day-by-day dying to self, walking in the Spirit, and being washed by the Word of God through obedience. *Titus 3:5* says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The tragedy is, Christians who have actually read the entire Bible, even once, or who faithfully study it in earnest, are hard to find in our post-modern era. Another tragedy is the fact that multitudes of people who consider themselves to be "good" people, living "good" lives, doing "good" works are nevertheless lost, and missing from the narrow road. Full of the pride of life, they have never humbled themselves in their heart of hearts to come into agreement with God's definition of sin, and their own lost condition.

The other gate that Jesus talked about is wide, and easy to enter. The path is broad. Entering in through this wide gate requires little, if any effort. Living the life on the broad path is normal by the world's standards. On this broad path one can find a variety of doors. One such door is religion. Behind the religious door a person will discover a variety of beliefs and practices that offer the way to "heaven" through man-made theologies and doctrines of demons. Behind this religious door one can also find popular "Christian" culture where he or she may play the game, talk the talk, and look the part without ever paying the price of self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Jesus. This broad path offers "another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel" (*2 Corinthians 11:4*). Other doors offered on the broad path are worldly pleasures, power, fame, fortune and the occult. The wide door of

an altered state of consciousness through drugs, hypnotism, trances, transcendental meditation, New Age mysticism, and so forth lead a person straight into Satan's domain. No doubt volumes could, and have been, written about these and other doors that lead to death and destruction.

A number of years ago we knew a man whose agenda was to be the pastor of a certain church. We watched him over a period of time cleverly weasel his way towards his goal, and when a narrow window of opportunity arose, he "pole vaulted" his way into the pulpit where he led the sheep into spiritually poisonous pastures. Several years later, as he lay dying of cancer, he looked at his wife, and began pleading and yelling, "Open the door! Open the door!" It is a fearful thing to consider that perhaps, as his soul was departing, he stood before heaven's door and it remained closed to him.

God has provided "the way, the truth, and the life" in the Lord Jesus Christ. He, and He alone, is the Door to eternal life. If you have grown lukewarm in your walk with the Lord, for whatever reason, Jesus says to you, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" *Revelation 3:20*.

The question is, which side of the door are you on? †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

OVERCOMING – IS IT AN OPTION?

Q: What does it mean to Scripturally overcome?

A: According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, "overcoming" points to the idea of prevailing over something in a mighty way. It implies rendering something to an inferior position, to enslave, or to master something.

The Bible is clear that we must overcome three things: the flesh, the world, and Satan. It gives us examples and instructions on how to overcome all three. For example, Jesus left us the example of what it means to overcome. *Ezekiel 14:14* gives us an example of three men, (Daniel, Noah, and Job) who would have been delivered in times of great judgment because they were overcomers, and Jesus gave us simple

Continued, Pg. 6, Col. 1

have possessed the knowledge, but I lacked the vision to see it through. To lack vision in the spiritual arena means I may have hope about a matter, but I do not have any expectation that it will come true. The absence of expectation points to the lack of sobriety and endurance to see something through. In essence, a person really does not fear displeasing the Lord nor does he or she love Him enough to deny self life on his or her terms, and apply the cross to all that would displease Him.

Obviously, many people may know what is true, but if they lack the foresight (wisdom) to walk it out, they will end up losing their vision to the state of unbelief. Clearly, genuine faith is active and it is forever declaring a matter to be "amen."

Today we are watching prophecies surrounding the end days coming true. To survive, we must declare "amen" to such matters regardless of how overwhelming these events appear to be. However, to endure to the end to ensure salvation we must walk out what we know to be true according to the character, ways, and will of our Lord (*Matthew 24:13*). Genuine faith not only brings us to those places where we will experience the promised life of heaven, but it will prepare and advance us towards our final destination to experience the fullness of our eternal inheritance in the unending presence and unfolding glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. †

QUOTABLE

"Prayer can do anything that God can do." - E.M. Bounds

"Christ bears with the saints' imperfections; well may the saints one with another." - William Gurnall

"God's wounds cure, sin's kisses kill." - William Gurnall

"The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." - G. K. Chesterton

"A man is what he is on his knees before God—and nothing more." - Robert Murray McCheyne

Overcomers, Con't. from Pg. 5

instructions as to how to overcome, as well as the power of His Spirit to do so.

To overcome the flesh, we have the example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He struggled greatly against the weakness of His flesh. He overcame it by submitting to the will of the Father. For Daniel, who lived in the midst of a pagan, decadent society, he purposed in his heart to remain true to the simple, pure ways of God. In the end, he possessed an excellent spirit. It is for this reason that Jesus told those who wanted to be His disciples that they first had to deny self the right to choose fleshly appetites over the will of God. As Jesus stated so eloquently during His temptation in the wilderness, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out the mouth of God."* *Romans 13:14* tells us that we must put on the Lord Jesus and not make any provision for the flesh. We do this by walking in the Spirit. We clearly must take captive our fleshly appetites to overcome the deadly ways and works of the flesh. (*Daniel 1:8; 6:3; Matthew 4:4; 16:24; 26:38-46; Galatians 4:16; Hebrews 5:7*).

When it comes to overcoming the world, we can get insight into it when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Satan showed the glories of the kingdoms of the world to Jesus and offered it all to Him if He would bow down and worship him (*Matthew 4:8-10*). Jesus knew this was an attempt of the enemy to detour Him from His real mission. He did not come to gain the world by bowing down to its glory and serving its many whims and demands, but to lose His life to the ways of the world so that He could overcome it. He also knew that there was a greater glory awaiting Him and that He would never compromise the heavenly to experience the temporary (*1 John 2:15-17*). The Lord knew that in due time He would subdue the world and reign over it. After all, the world's glory is temporary. It will fade with each age as it spirals downward into a cesspool of destruction and ruin to eventually come to a complete demise. Meanwhile, in each

age, it must always redefine its glory through deception.

A good example of a man who overcame the world was Noah. Noah lived in the midst of a wicked world. The way he overcame it was by walking with God (*Genesis 6:8-9*). It takes faith to walk with God. Out of active faith comes obedience to what one knows to be right before the Lord. We see this in Noah's life. He obeyed the Lord and built an ark. Due to His faith, it was accounted unto Noah as righteousness. It is for this reason that the Apostle Peter stated in *2 Peter 2:5*, *"And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."* *Hebrews 11:7* goes on to say that because of his faith, Noah condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness.

Faith brings the contrast of righteousness into the world. It walks according to a rhythm that is contrary to the present age. It sees beyond the present and walks according to the future. It is for this reason that genuine faith in Christ overcomes the world. For the flesh, one must submit to the will of God in a matter, but to overcome the world, one must by faith carry out the will of God to ensure that all matters are counted as being righteous (*1 John 2:17; 5:4*).

We must separate from the influence of the world by refusing to touch any unclean thing. Jesus gives us insight into how to do this when He told those who followed Him to pick up their personal cross. He added that what will it profit a man if he gains the world, but loses his soul (*Matthew 16:24-25*). The Apostle Paul reveals what type of effect the cross-bearing life has when it comes to the world in *Galatians 6:14*, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*

The final enemy we must overcome is Satan. We know Peter was sifted by Satan and Job was tested by him. It is clear that Satan has a role in refining the Christian's faith. Jesus told Peter in relationship to Satan sifting him that once he was converted, he needed to strengthen his brethren.

We know it is because of the steadfast patience of Job's faith that he was able to endure to the end of the test (*Luke 22:31-32; James 5:10-11*).

Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (*1 Peter 5:8*). In His temptation, Jesus overcame Satan with the Word. We read in *1 John 2:13-14* that the young men overcame the wicked one because the Word of God abided in them. It is clear that the Word is a capable weapon against Satan, but one must recognize its authority and submit to the Author of it through obedience.

James 4:7 states, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* Hence, enters Jesus' final exhortation to those who want to be His disciples, they must follow Him. There are only two ways to resist the devil—in humility you follow Jesus, as you take the Word of God by faith and lift it up in abiding confidence that the enemy has already been defeated at the cross of Christ.

For the flesh, we must take its lusts captive to overcome. When it comes to the world, we must prevail over its many influences in a mighty way, but for Satan, he must be rendered ineffective and inferior in light of Christ. He cannot stand up against Jesus' authority as God, he cannot withstand the truth of the Word for he is a liar, and he cannot continue to stand when faith endures to the end and is accounted as righteousness in lieu of his many lies and accusations.

The Bible is clear—we must overcome. It is also clear that you cannot study the concept of overcoming unless you study it according to the book of *Revelation*. This book will give you much-needed insight into overcoming. Even as you study the churches in the first three chapters of *Revelation*, you will see that most of them needed to overcome one of the three enemies of man's soul. †

QUOTABLE

"In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here these are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ." – William Gurnall