

Admonitions for Overcoming

*“To him that
overcometh will I
grant to sit with
me in my throne,
even as I also
overcame, and am
set down with my
Father in his
throne.”*

—*Revelation 3:21*

THE WORD OF GOD AS

contained in the Bible is the source from which true believers derive their strength. It commends itself to us by providing direction, hope, peace and understanding to all who are spiritually enlightened and apply its precepts in their

lives. The Apostle Paul, describing the power of the Bible, asserts, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [Greek: complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.—II Tim. 3:16,17

Those who fully appreciate the importance of studying God’s word are engaged in the process of being changed from earthly to spiritually-mindedness so that their lives can more nearly reflect the Christ-like character. Such individuals who have accepted the present invitation to become disciples of Christ

through self-denial and sacrifice, find their acceptance to God manifested by an increasing ability to adhere to the words of Paul, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) Let us now consider twelve scriptural admonitions which, if faithfully applied in our daily lives, can assist us in becoming members of the body of Christ under the leadership of our Head, Jesus Christ, to bless all the human family during God’s kingdom.—Matt. 6:10

BE FERVENT IN PRAYER

One of the greatest privileges afforded to consecrated believers is access to the Heavenly Father through the means of prayer. Our faithfulness in coming often and tarrying at the throne of grace is indispensable to our Christian development. Thus we are encouraged to seek instructions as to the kinds of things for which we should petition our loving Creator. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13) After having petitioned the Lord for his blessings we need to demonstrate vigilance, that we will exercise ourselves in ways which are pleasing to him. This can be done through the use of fellowship with our brethren, study, and careful scrutiny of our thoughts, words and deeds, to the intent that we will be pure in our hearts.

Consider the Master’s petition on our behalf before his crucifixion. “I pray not that thou shouldest take

them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15) We want to be delivered from temptation and danger by exercising ourselves along those lines which will keep us safe, and by avoiding those things which are unclean. Thus we will stay very close to the Lord, his word, and his practices. Here is another helpful exhortation. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5) An interesting consideration about our petitions is that the Lord expects us to work at them, to seek the answers to our prayers. If we desire wisdom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we should engage in activities such as thinking deeply upon God’s Word, devotion and discussion by meeting with others of the brotherhood so that we might be instructed aright from the oracles of God. We also should pray for our brethren in their efforts of spreading the Gospel, of prospering such activities in their capacity as ministers of God. Surely prayers which seek only self-interest could not be acceptable to the Heavenly Father, for we are all part of the one body of Christ.—I Cor. 12:12; Col. 4:2,3

VIEW ADVERSITY AS DIVINELY PERMITTED

With regard to the world of mankind, the permission of evil has been allowed to teach humanity the exceeding sinfulness of sin in order that during God’s kingdom, they will be able to contrast the fruitage of disobedience with the blessings of life and happiness that will be enjoyed by all who obey the righteous government then in existence. With regard to the present, adversity also is permitted to test and

develop the believers' faithfulness to the end that they might have a crystallized character. Of the Master, during his earthly sojourn we read, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—Heb. 5:8,9

Jesus demonstrated his ability to remain fully submissive to the Father under every difficult circumstance, thus being made complete as a New Creature and worthy of his subsequent high exaltation. Sometimes as believers, God permits troubles to come upon us for our character development when we are not progressing as we should. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. 12:11

DEMONSTRATE LOVE FOR ALL

Here is perhaps the best known Scripture on the subject of love in the Bible. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) As we examine this passage, it gives us some understanding as to the depth of love which must be ours as Christians. It would not have surprised us if this text indicated that God loved the holy angels, who as perfect spirit beings have remained loyal and true from their creation to the present, serving him always, as he desires. As imperfect beings, but desirous of serving God in spirit and in truth, we also are not surprised that our Heavenly Father would manifest his

abundant love towards us, because we have turned from sin unto righteousness. However, when we realize that his unsurpassed love has been provided for the entire world—dying beings who through centuries of sin and degradation have lost much of the original image and likeness of the Creator—that is astounding!

Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34,35) The love described here is not to be simply a non-negative love in that we would not knowingly injure anyone. Rather, it is to be a love that is active, positive, and delights to do good for others, even at the expense of our time, energy, means, strength and convenience as we have opportunity. Such is indeed a high standard.

AVOID MEDDLESOME BEHAVIOR

Peter admonished, “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.” (I Pet. 4:15) One important point to be kept in mind is that the New Testament writers, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, provide an abundance of exhortations as to the things we must do in order to merit the Heavenly Father’s approval. We do, indeed, wish to manifest concern and sympathy for all, especially the household of faith. We do not want to be indifferent to the needs of others, but should always be ready to lend a helping hand to those who require assistance.

With regard to our brethren, we should be alert to opportunities to assist the sick, the isolated, to

be encouraging to those who are bereaved, or who are suffering in some way because of an error in judgment or action which seems to overwhelm them. In manifesting compassion, we should be less inclined to publicly share what we do for others because we desire to have more of that Christlike character which prompts the doing of good without any personal recognition or gain. If we are made aware of the trials experienced by our brethren, our motivation should dictate how we handle such matters. We should not broadcast them indiscriminately if there is any likelihood that mentioning such matters would engender gossip, rather than discreet, helpful assistance. Let us not cultivate any of those tendencies which are connected with the fallen human nature.

BE PATIENT TOWARDS OTHERS

By nature, in view of our fallen flesh, we are impatient about many situations. Often, we manifest this trait towards others because they do not do things the way we think they should be done. We also have dealings with merchants of one kind or another who may disappoint us in the manner or speed in which they provide a particular service. Do we suppose God knows all about these occurrences in advance? Is it possible such an experience is designed to test our characters as to whether we would be complainers that people no longer have a sense of responsibility or pride in their workmanship? How about our brethren? Are we ever impatient with them because they do not view certain matters the way we do and then perhaps begin to comment to others about their seeming peculiarities and

deficiencies? “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.”—James 1:2-4, *International Standard Version*

In thinking about the Heavenly Father, who has greater patience than he? Is God impatient with Satan’s wickedness, and is the Creator going to change his plan, and not wait for the Bride of Christ to be completed before blessings flow to the human family? What should the Heavenly Father do to us when we make repeated failures during our Christian sojourn? We surely need God’s patience extended towards us as we come short of his requirements on many occasions. Let us employ self-examination along these lines and be merciful towards others, while at the same time not make excuses for ourselves where we could and should do better.

DO NOT BE HYPERSENSITIVE

During his last night on earth, the Master left his true followers a legacy of peace that is not available to others who are not in covenant relationship with God. (John 14:27) How can we maintain this peace in a world where sometimes we are unjustly criticized? How can we claim the promise, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee?” (Isa. 26:3) One of the most important steps in this regard is to improve our prayer life. This will assist us in accepting all of our experiences, whether painful to the flesh or not, as being under divine supervision. What

comforting assurances we receive when we demonstrate fervency in this area and cast all our burdens upon the Lord.

We also should consider God's Old Testament servants as examples of faithfulness under adversity and determine that we will be encouraged to trust the Heavenly Father no less than they did. One of the factors which may disturb our peace is a feeling that our difficult experiences are unique and that others could not possibly understand nor appreciate what we have gone through. That may be partially true, but sometimes others have more difficulties than ourselves. For example, have we ever been stoned or sawn asunder like any of the prophets of old? (Heb. 11:37) We can gain strength and encouragement to endure through Paul's exhortation, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." —I Cor. 10:13, *New American Standard Bible*

DO NOT RENDER EVIL FOR EVIL

Jesus totally ignored the scorn and ignominy heaped upon him by the Scribes and the Pharisees. How was this possible? It was for the joy set before him of pleasing his Father, which enabled him to do this. He humbled himself to the death of the cross. He who knew no sin permitted himself to be ridiculed, evil spoken of and considered a blasphemer. (I Pet. 2:22,23) When we look upon Jesus, are we willing to despise the shame? Do we ever get a little self-righteous and inquire, "How dare someone treat us in a certain manner" (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) or speak about us in a certain way?" There was none of that kind of attitude in Jesus. He did not respond to personal attacks but submitted to the taunts of evil men. What is the lesson for us? The servant is not above the Master. All manner of evil may be said against us falsely, but let us strive to walk as he walked. "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." —I Pet. 2:20,21

RECTIFY GRIEVANCES SCRIPTURALLY

In dealing with serious problems involving our brethren, we should always go to them directly, and in the spirit of love, to resolve issues needing to be addressed. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Matt. 18:15) If we need guidance in how to approach such an individual, it might be appropriate to go to someone very mature in the Lord, for counsel, using a hypothetical circumstance and without being specific so that no connection could be made as to the identity of the seeming offender. Sometimes we may have done something against our brother knowingly and with some degree of willfulness. What shall we do? The principle is the same. We are to go to our brother, but in this case, we are to confess our wrong and to seek forgiveness. This might be a little hard to do, and we may be ashamed

for fear he will not readily forgive. We might be inclined simply to pray to the Heavenly Father for forgiveness in an attempt to square our account. Scripturally, however, we are not to do that.

If we have evil thoughts, spoken malicious words, or done wrongful deeds against our brother, even if he does not know it, we cannot bring our worship, praise or service to the Father in an acceptable manner if we do not first go to our brother to make amends. “Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”—Matt. 5:23,24

RESIST INCLINATIONS TOWARDS PRIDE

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:5) In this scripture, Paul directs our attention to the fact that sinful tendencies are often entrenched in our minds, in our imaginations, in our thoughts. Sometimes it is a little pride, or selfishness, or the adherence to superstitions or false doctrines. Only the Holy Spirit, and the influence of God’s Word will cast down imaginations, ignorance, unholy ambitions, speculations, and every form of thought which would be detrimental to our spiritual growth and development.

The high things in this passage might relate to a sense of superiority, caused by a desire to be recognized by others, to be well thought of, to receive the empty honors of the earth, to have wealth, influence, or to be held in esteem, either by the world or even by our brethren. Such a desire for self-exaltation is a deeply rooted characteristic that

is part and parcel of our fallen nature, and must be striven against by hearkening unto the word of God. Surely, we must avoid entertaining pride as we would a plague. “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”—Prov. 16:5

FOCUS UPON SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS

“Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” (Tit. 3:9) This admonition reminds us to avoid spending time striving with controversies over and over to persuade others to accept our beliefs. In thinking about this concept, we would want to be certain that we are exercising our combative “strivings” upon conquering our own flesh, as opposed to dwelling repeatedly on speculations. Certain passages of Scripture are very interesting. Nevertheless, the use of a “thus saith the Lord” for what we believe is a critical matter of focus. If the Bible states and teaches something in an unambiguous manner, then we should accept it. There are, however, many areas where we have not received explicit instructions from the Lord or the apostles. If they are merely matters of personal choice, we should be of such a mind as to allow differences of opinion, and not permit these to become a bar to our hearty fellowship with one another.

STRIVE FOR A PURE HEART

“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my

mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. (Ps. 19:12-14) Secret faults may be of two varieties. First, there are those unintentional shortcomings, which may be unknown to ourselves when we commit them. If we have the proper heart attitude, our devotions will always embody the spirit of this prayer, because it is our desire to be found pure and clean. The other category of secret faults relates to those which are unknown to others, but recognized by us as well as the Lord. When such thoughts enter our mind, we must be careful to repulse them so that they do not lead to presumptuous sins of wrongful conduct, such as backbiting, or evil surmising. Thus, if the meditations of our hearts are proper, they will assist us so that the words of our mouths will be acceptable to God, because it is true, that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.—Matt. 12:34

DO NOT TRUST YOUR NATURAL CONSCIENCE

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9) This is a very hard saying because Christians are, in a sense, dual beings. We have this treasure of the new mind in an earthen vessel. Here is another quote that addresses this same battle with which even Paul had to contend: “O wretched man that I am? who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom. 7:24,25) The new mind, will, heart and conscience all struggle to overcome our fallen human nature.

However, success comes only when we are consistent in striving to do God's will by carefully scrutinizing our thoughts, words, and by rooting out all tendencies not in accord with godly principles.

MANIFEST REVERENCE TO GOD

Gospel Age believers are admonished to learn from the unsatisfactory example of Israel. We are to manifest a reverent sobriety with regard to our walk, lest we neglect to properly act upon the exceeding great and precious promises which are given to us by failing to make our calling and election sure. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1) Our reflection upon fleshly Israel's failure as a nation to inherit the chief spiritual blessings should sensitize us as to the need for demonstrating our faith in God, and by being obedient to the various admonitions which are given in Scripture to guide us in the doing of his will.

Let us heed the foregoing admonitions so that we may bring forth fruitage in our lives that will be pleasing to God. "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
—II Pet. 1:8-11 ■