



## Volume 78 No. 4 MELBOURNE, JULY/AUGUST 1995 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (From the message to Laodicea -Rev. 3:21, 22)*

We who have heard the call of God and felt the influence of His drawing power, who have responded to that call by making a consecration of our lives to Him by giving up our will to do His blessed will, are the recipients of many wonderful and amazing promises. These are so great that we never would have aspired to them in our wildest fantasies, if they had not been so clearly stated in the sacred word - heirs of God, joint-heirs with our Master, like Him immortal on the divine plane of existence, members of God's spiritual family, kings and priests to reign with Christ and assist in completing the divine plan to bring this planet and its people up to perfection.

The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:3-4 (part) tells us that we have been "*called to glory and virtue*" and "*given exceeding great and precious promises.*" This is our calling, not just an ordinary calling, but as the scriptures describe it - "*a high calling*" -Phil. 3:14. Let us reflect for a moment on these promises and reflect also that at present they are provisional on our overcoming. Our risen Lord's messages to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2 & 3) each close by listing one of our precious promises and each time we are told that the promise is for those who overcome.

Each of us needs a hope in life, a goal, something to aim for, something that gives the incentive to carry on in the face of adversity and trial, something worthwhile at the end of the road. Surely the promises contained in God's word give us that, and more than that - "*As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.*" 1 Cor. 2:9. These things have not been revealed to the natural man, but the following verse assures us - "*but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*" 1 Cor. 2:10.

Surely only the bare outline has yet been revealed, we still see through a glass darkly; we cannot comprehend what living in the spirit realm would be like, but undoubtedly it will be more wonderful than anything we could imagine from this side of the veil. Should we desire and want this great position of authority, honour and glory that has been promised to us, is it something that we should seek for? The apostle Paul thought so, noting his words in Romans 2:6, 7 - "*God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, He will give eternal life.*"

Above all else, we should desire and seek for all these things. To be overcomers and receive the prize of the high calling should be the great aim and goal in our lives, but not because we desire honour and glory for ourselves, not because we desire to be somebody and exercise authority over others. If we were of this frame of mind, we would be quite unsuitable material for God's purposes. Why then do we desire these things, what is our motivation? Above all else, we desire these things because they are what our Heavenly Father desires for us, they are the purpose of our calling. It would be ungracious of us not to have a proper appreciation of those things which the Heavenly Father has offered us. If we prove faithful overcomers in this life, God will give us this honour and position in the next age, so that we will have the authority to accomplish the great work He has in store for us. We desire these things because we are so much in harmony with His great plan that we eagerly look forward to having a small part, under our Head, Jesus Christ, in bringing it to fruition.

Let us draw an illustration from an apprenticeship. An employer might take on an apprentice, to be a motor mechanic, cabinet maker, carpenter, plumber, etc. He spends his time, effort and money in training the apprentice; he desires a return on the time and labour he has spent on him; he wants him to succeed and become a skilled tradesman serving him in his business operations. And so it is with us - each of us is an apprentice

at the present time in the great schoolhouse of Christ. Our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus are bestowing their efforts and labour upon us; it is God who worketh in us and who gives us of His Holy Spirit. If we are pliable and yielding clay, Our Father will mould us into a copy of His dear Son. He will supply the power and strength to enable us to be overcomers and gain the victory. We ourselves must have singleness of purpose, we must have the desire to be overcomers, we must work and labour in harmony with the Divine will.

Like the employer, our Heavenly Father expects some return for His outlay; He expects us to develop a meek and humble character and become such as can be used in His business operations. Like Jesus, we must be about our Father's business, now at this present time, and in a much greater and grander way in the next age. Let us then make every effort to be overcomers, let us not receive this great favour and grace bestowed upon us in vain, let us make sure that our Heavenly Father obtains the return that He is looking for.

The term "overcomer" implies that there is something to be overcome; it implies that the Christian's pathway will not be smooth and easy, with all the stones and stumbling-blocks taken out. On the contrary, we may expect to find hurdles and obstacles along the way which must be overcome.

The apostle Paul at times draws upon army life for his illustrations. The life of a soldier is not one of ease and relaxation - this would not make him fit and strong, capable of fighting battles. On the contrary, he is subjected to rigorous training, must negotiate difficult obstacle courses, go on long and strenuous route marches - these give him the physical strength required. As Christian soldiers in Christ's army, we obtain our spiritual strength, our strength of character, by overcoming the hurdles and obstacles we find strewn along life's pathway. If we had nothing to overcome, we could not become strong and develop the character our Heavenly Father wants for us.

Can we define in detail then what we must overcome? To answer this question, perhaps we should each search our own hearts. Each of us, as an individual, knows better than anyone else just what it is that we must overcome. Each of us is an individual, each of us is different. There is a great diversity among those whom our Heavenly Father has called, and we may be grateful for that. We all have individual personalities and characters; we all have individual weaknesses and failings, individual good points and strengths. A particular trait of character that is very difficult for one brother or sister to overcome may pose no problem to another. We hear the expression that someone has a besetting sin, referring to a particular weakness of that person.

*"Wherefore, seeing that we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."* Heb. 12:1. We cannot be sure just what the sin was that the writer had in mind here; some think that it was a lack of faith, but could it not be a reference to an individual besetting sin, a sin that is different for each of us. The first step in overcoming our particular weaknesses is to recognise them, to come to a realisation that none of us is perfect, we all have overcoming work to perform on ourselves. If we feel that we are already perfect in every way, no progress can possibly be made.

When we ask the question as to what must be overcome, a standard stock answer often is - "the world, the flesh and the devil." While this is a well-worn expression, it is still a very true one and as regards overcoming the world, the well known and often quoted statement of Paul in Romans 12:2 comes readily to mind - *"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."* In other words, he says - to overcome the world, do not allow yourself to be influenced by their conduct and behaviour. There is a tendency among some, especially the young, to desire to be like their peers, to be one of the crowd. They feel it is embarrassing to stand alone, to be different, but we have been called to swim against the current, which is always harder than going with it.

The instruction "be not conformed to this world" is specially appropriate in our day. During the lifetime of many of us, there has been a great deterioration in standards. To a greater extent than ever before, society has become faithless and amoral. During a recent radio panel discussion on the topic "Should children be told that there is a Santa Claus?", one panel member said - "Santa Claus is part of mythology, like believing in God." The other panellists seemed to be in agreement with this, reminding us of Jesus' words - *"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"* Luke 18:8, indicating that there would be little faith at that time. Jesus also said that at the end of the age, it would be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. We have only to watch the T.V. news to see the truth of His statements.

*"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. None of us would have any desire to be conformed to these things, but to see them happening, and know that they are fulfilling God's word, should be strengthening to our faith. But there are other more subtle worldly activities and pursuits that must be overcome, activities which are not evil or wrong in themselves and in their right place. We must not however allow them to dominate us, crowd out the spiritual life or our service to God and the brethren.

How do we go about overcoming the world? Perhaps we can find answers in the following verses-

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 3:1, 2.*

*“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.” 1 John 5:4, 5*

Jesus furthermore is our model or pattern. He also had to overcome and we remember His words of our text - *“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.” Rev. 3:21* - and again in John 16:33, we have the words of our Master - *“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

Our Forerunner and Elder Brother has overcome the world and we must follow His example. Let us look at Rev. 5:5, which is speaking of Jesus - *“And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof”* Here “prevailed” is the same word as “overcome” of our text. Verse 9 of the same chapter says in part - *“Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof”* “It was because Jesus overcame and gained the victory, while here on earth, that He was accounted worthy to open the sealed book.

We must also overcome while here on earth, in order to be accounted worthy of that place in the divine plan that our Heavenly Father has in reserve for us. An interesting point to think about is that Jesus was always sinless and perfect, yet He still had to be tested and tried and to overcome, just as we do -

*“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) “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Heb. 2:17, 18)*

The Greek word translated “merciful” has the meaning of being kind and compassionate, and if our great High Priest was called upon to overcome trials, temptation and suffering, surely we must be overcomers also. We are part of that same priesthood, of which the apostle tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 - *“ye are a royal priesthood”* “We are the under-priests, we must also develop sympathy, kindness and compassion, to perfect us for our part in the great work of the next age, when we are reigning with Christ and sharing in the work of judging our fellowmen. Our great High Priest deals with us in a kind and compassionate manner, and during this lifetime, which is our “apprenticeship”, we must develop these same traits of character. Our Heavenly Father is not looking for stern faced, stony hearted, uncaring judges to preside over the millennial age kingdom - we must be able to display the same traits of character which our High Priest displays toward us.

Why is God selecting His special family from the world of fallen mankind? He could have made up the required number from perfect spirit beings, just as He made the angels. The answer seems clear - just to make perfect beings in the first place is no guarantee that they will remain that way, no guarantee that they will retain the perfect character that they were created with and will remain obedient and faithful to the One who created them. Even our dear Master, the perfect Jesus, had to be tested and tried and go through affliction and to overcome. It was these experiences that crystallised and fixed His character permanently, only then could the Heavenly Father give Him to have life in Himself - immortality. *“For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” John 5:26.* This was not a quality which He possessed prior to His resurrection, for an immortal could not have died on the cross of Calvary. 1

We have only to look back over times past to see the results from God’s perfect creation. Everything that God makes is initially perfect. We read that when God created the earth, its animal population and the first human pair - *“God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Gen. 1:31.* In other words, it was perfect, yet it was not very long before Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator and fell from their initial perfection. When God made the angelic beings, these would have also been perfect, yet many fell into disobedience and sin, and became what we now refer to as the evil spirits.

We think also of Satan himself, who apparently at one stage held a special place in heaven. He seems to be referred to in Ezekiel 28, under the symbolism of the king of Tyrus - *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; . . . thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee.” (Vv14, 15)* Yet Satan became the great adversary of God and man.

With all this in mind, we can now see the vital importance of overcoming. A life that has been tested and tried in the fires of affliction, and has come through victorious, is very special and precious in God’s sight, more precious than fine gold. It is only to the overcomers that God will give the deathproof condition of im-

mortality, as it says at the close of the message to the church at Smyrna - "*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*" (Rev. 2:11) Before God gives immortality to any, He must be completely sure that there is no possibility of their falling away at any future time.

We have seen that we must overcome the world, its opportunities, allurements and distractions, not be conformed to its way of life, must dare to be different and stand alone. These are all outside influences that must be overcome, outside of ourselves, and we now come to overcoming the flesh. This speaks of influences within ourselves, of overcoming desires of the flesh, our earthly weaknesses, faults and failings, those imperfect traits of character that we have been born with, through heredity. There are also those traits of character that we ourselves have developed through a wrong attitude of mind; as already noted, these are different for each one of us. With some, it could be a quick temper - we need to learn to be calm, quiet and placid, even when others are acting just the reverse towards us. "*A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir anger*" Prov. 15:1.

We must also overcome any spirit of pride, of self-importance, of - "*thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought...let each esteem others better than themselves.*" Rom. 12:3, Phil. 2:3. The attitude we should develop is well described in the words of the beautiful old hymn -

O! To be nothing, nothing,  
Only to lie at His feet,  
A broken and emptied vessel  
For the Master's use made meet.  
Emptied that He might fill me,  
As forth to His service I go.

We must further overcome any spirit of criticism, of judging others harshly. We must not expect perfection, for we live in an imperfect world inhabited by imperfect people. If we are looking for perfection in others, we are always going to be disappointed. Perhaps we find it harder to overlook the faults of our brethren, because we expect so much more from them, and rightly so. But let us not be looking for absolute perfection, which none of us can possess in this earthly tabernacle.

Overcoming the flesh really means overcoming self and the desires of self. We remember the words of our Master - "*Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" Matt. 16:24. This is a most important part of overcoming - the overcoming of self and the pleasing of self. When decisions of life have to be made by the average worldly person, the only criterion in arriving at the decision is usually self - what is going to be pleasing to self, what will give pleasure and happiness, what will be of personal benefit? We must overcome self in making decisions; the questions we should ask are - what would be pleasing to our Heavenly Father, what would be most beneficial to our brethren, what would Jesus do?

Of course, we must support ourselves and not be a burden on others; we must make proper provision for our families, but always keeping in mind the words of our Master - "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Matt. 6:33. Let us always take care of our legitimate secular interest in a proper way, but make sure that they never intrude upon, or crowd out, our service to God. The first place in our hearts and affections must be for His kingdom, His business interests, His people.

Finally, each Christian is called upon to overcome not only the *world* of external enticements, the *flesh* with its inner weaknesses and desires but the *devil*, the great opponent of God and His people. We need to heed the scripture warnings - "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.*" 1 Peter 5:8. "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" Eph. 6:12. But we must also remember the assurance - "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" James 4:7.

We cannot doubt that many of our wrong thoughts and our temptations come from our great adversary, but we have even more powerful help. If we truly desire to be overcomers, we have our Heavenly Father and Jesus working on our side, so how can we fail while we trust? We all have a strong desire to be perfect as He is perfect, and this is the end result of overcoming; this is achieved when we pass beyond the veil. In this life, we must seek to achieve perfection of heart, of character, of desire. If we have this desire, and aim our lives to this end, we will succeed, not in our own strength, but as with the apostle Paul -

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."* Phil. 4:13

*"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Rom. 8:37*

(Convention Address JGT:1/95)

### **Speak Gently**

Speak gently. It is better far  
    To rule by love than fear  
Speak gently—let no harsh words mar  
    The good we might do here.

Speak gently. Love doth whisper low  
    The vows that true hearts bind;  
And gently Friendship's accents flow  
    Affection's voice is kind.

Speak gently to the little child.  
    Its love is sure to gain;  
Teach it accents soft and mild;  
    It may not long remain.

Speak gently to the young, for they  
    Will have enough to bear  
Pass through this life as best they may;  
    'Tis full of anxious care.

Speak gently to the aged one,  
    Grieve not the care-worn heart;  
The sands of life are nearly run  
    Let such in peace depart.

Speak gently, kindly, to the poor;  
    Let no harsh tone be heard;  
They have enough they must endure,  
    Without an unkind word.

Speak gently to the erring: know,  
    They may have toil'd in vain;  
Perchance unkindness made them so;  
    Oh, win them back again.

Speak gently: He who gave His life  
    To bend man's stubborn will,  
When elements were in fierce strife,  
    Said to them "Peace, be still."

Speak gently. 'Tis a little thing  
    Dropped in the heart's deep well;  
The good, the joy, which it may bring,  
    Eternity shall tell.

(Bates)

## **The Glad Resurrection Day**

*"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" – Psa. 30:5*

Jesus, on the night immediately prior to His sacrifice on behalf of us all, said –"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Within a few hours of uttering these words Jesus was to suffer and die on the cross. How could those disciples believe in Him then? However, on the third day they were

to learn that Christ had risen from the dead. He was a living Saviour then! This He had predicted also on the night prior to His death, when He said—"Ye now therefore have sorrow (you have sorrow when I say I must leave you), but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

Did Jesus see those disciples again? He surely did! And He has seen us again, so to speak, since we became Christians. Those disciples in Jesus' day were weak and timid while He was still with them, but after His resurrection appearances to them, and especially after Pentecost, they became strong, confident and full of faith in Him. The same has happened to us, as Christians, since we have learned to know and love the Lord, and to feel assured that He does all things well.

After Jesus' resurrection, those disciples at His first advent understood what His death and resurrection would mean for them, and for all mankind, in due time; and so do we, when we grasp the wonderful truth—that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man"—for every human being who has ever lived. Those are the words of the Apostle Paul, and he knew the truth. He said again—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Then the Apostle Peter declared that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." But Jesus doesn't bring all mankind to God in the present life, does He? Yet another Scripture declares—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." How many of the world have already been reconciled to God? Not everyone, we all admit. But Christ tasted death for everyone—in every city and country in the world!

And all mankind are yet to benefit from Christ's sacrifice for them. But How? The words of our risen Lord, through the Apostle John, help us in this matter when He said—"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell, and of death." What did Jesus mean by having the keys of hell? The Bible hell is the condition of death, and Jesus went to the Bible hell for all mankind. We call to mind the Scripture in Psa. 16:10, quoted by the Apostle in Acts 2: 31, after Jesus' resurrection—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"—which was fulfilled in our Lord's resurrection—"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"—Acts 2: 32.

The words of the Psalmist help us further, in Psa. 102:19, 20—"For God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." What a scene the Almighty beholds on earth today with man's inhumanity to man, and death taking away the human family one by one throughout the world. But God is going to loose the prisoners that are appointed to death—those in the prison-house of death. It's lovely to know that the Psalmist was given that information, by inspiration of God, so long ago, and it's absolutely true.

To illustrate or picture the wonderful resurrection day, when all mankind shall be awakened from the death condition, we have an account given in John's Gospel respecting the resurrection of a dear brother who had passed away while Jesus was absent from the locality where he lived. When Jesus returned He performed such a marvellous miracle which brought joy and rejoicing to the hearts of the two sorrowing sisters in particular, and which also brings hope and encouragement to our hearts, as we accept by faith the lesson God would wish us to take from this lovely incident. We refer to John 11 where the death and resurrection of Lazarus is recorded. When Lazarus became sick the sisters sent a message to Jesus—"He whom thou lovest is sick"—hoping and expecting, perhaps, that Jesus would return quickly and cure the sickness. They had become acquainted with the Lord curing people, bringing them back to health and strength. But Jesus did not return, and Lazarus died. Then Jesus said to His disciples with Him—"We'll go back and awake Lazarus out of sleep." The disciples replied that if he slept he would do well. Then Jesus said plainly—"Lazarus is dead."

When our Lord returned He was met by Martha who said—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus said unto her—"Thy brother shall rise again." To which Martha replied—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha had learned that truth from Jesus, no doubt. Then Jesus said to her—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead (though he die), yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth (then) and believeth in me shall never die." The miracle that followed was intended to illustrate just what Jesus had said in respect of all mankind.

When Mary met Jesus she expressed the same thought as Martha—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." We note the emphasis was on Jesus curing their brother while he still lived; they had not expected their brother to be restored to life, for he had been dead four days. When our Lord asked where they had laid their brother, and approached the grave, asking that the stone be taken from the entrance, Martha was apprehensive, saying—"Lord, by this time he corrupteth: for he hath been dead four days." After prayer to the Heavenly Father, acknowledging that it was the Father's power that would perform the miracle, and that He knew it was God's will that it be carried out, we read that Jesus—"Cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth." We read—"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." Can we wonder that they believed on Him after such a miracle?

Could there be anything more wonderful than to realise what the fulfilment of that miracle will mean in the Kingdom of Christ—that all mankind shall be awakened from the sleep of death. Lazarus, of course, died again, but we note clearly that he was asleep in death for four days; he had not gone to heaven. Four days, four years, four hundred years, or four thousand years, make no difference to the Lord when the time comes to bring mankind back from the prison-house of death, to enjoy lasting life on the restored earth, by obedience to the laws of Christ's Kingdom.

How thankful we are to know of this glorious salvation provided by God, through the sacrifice of His dear Son who “tasted death for every man.” From the Apostle Paul we read again in the words of 1 Thes. 4:13, 14—“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” When we have hope in Christ, we know of a surety that our departed loved ones are in His keeping; they are “asleep in Jesus.” Paul continues—“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” This is a sure promise that God will bring back from the death condition all mankind at our Lord's second advent, that all may learn to know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and accepting Him also as their Saviour gain lasting life on the restored earth.

What a comfort is this gracious plan of salvation God has promised for His human family, through the gift of Jesus to be our Saviour. We do well to remember also, that we were all under the sentence of death, but through faith in Christ, we have a certificate for life. And those who, in this life do not gain a certificate for life, will have a full opportunity of obtaining that in the resurrection day. In explanation, previous mention was made of the words of the Apostle Paul—“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself”—but God has reconciled only a comparatively few of mankind unto Himself since Jesus' first advent. These, on proving faithful unto death in the steps of the Master, are promised a place in the heavenly kingdom, to reign with Christ, to assist in the restoring to life and blessing of the remainder of mankind who obey the laws of the earthly kingdom. This will be easy to do at that time, with Satan bound, and the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Then will be fulfilled the words of Rev. 22:17—“And the spirit and the bride say, Come.” There will be a Bride, then, for the Church will be with Christ for this great restoration work of a thousand years, on behalf of all the willing and obedient of resurrected humanity. “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Then shall also come to pass the fulfillment of Matt. 25: 34—“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (“The Voice”)

### He Never Fails

He never fails the soul that trusts in Him;  
Tho' disappointments come, and hope burns dim;  
He never fails.  
Tho' testing surge like angry seas around  
Tho' trials sore like ambushed foes abound,  
Yet this my soul with myriads more has found,  
He never fails

(JS Baxter)

## Knowing Him

The kernel or pivot of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God for the past two thousand years seems to be expressed in the statement of the Apostle in Phil. 3. 10, “*That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*” It reveals the only way to attain the great salvation of God and the steps by which we progress to the blessedness of association with God and Christ Jesus.

The first point is “*that I may know him.*” Primarily to know him means to have an intellectual appreciation of God and his purposes and the relation of Christ Jesus our Lord to God in bringing about those purposes. Secondly “*the power of his resurrection*”, the energising power of the Holy Spirit, must find access to our hearts and lives if that knowledge is to be fruitful in helping us to God. Thirdly “*the fellowship of his sufferings*”, the possession of the Holy Spirit and its possession of us is bound to lead us along in fellowship of his suffering through opposition to the world, the flesh and the adversary. Fourthly “*being made conformable to his death.*” The knowledge of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of his suffering are the only means by which conformity to God's dear Son can be effected in us, by which we can enter his death.

His was a sacrificial death, a poured out life, an offering on account of sin, and it is our privilege during this age to “follow in his steps.” “If we suffer with him we shall live with him” so the Apostle says, “being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Paul’s longing desire was to know Christ Jesus in the truest sense and to the utmost degree. That knowledge meant more to him than any other possession and in his quest for it he was prepared to sacrifice every other valued treasure. He declares in verse 7 “what things were gain to me these I counted loss.” His material gains, humanly speaking, were weighty; he was “*of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, in zeal a zealot, in righteousness according to the law blameless.*” He had increasing ambition, innumerable friends, exceptional talent and great treasures, yet “I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may win Christ and be found in him.” The wholeheartedness of the apostle has been an outstanding example to every follower of the Lord and reveals the secret of success in the Christian life and walk. When we consider Paul’s talents and advantages of social position, his ambition as a scholar and citizen of repute with a commission from the High Priest we are not surprised that he should be misinformed respecting Jesus of Nazareth and his followers and the false accusations filed against them should incite him to persecution, nor are we surprised that when arrested and rightfully informed and with eyes opened to the truth the same energies were directed to reverse his order of life and procedure. In his defence before King Agrippa he said “I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which I did and many of the saints I shut up in prison having received authority from the Chief Priest.” After relating his conversion he added, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” What a happy and glorious confession to make; from that time Paul expressed obedience to the Divine Will in every detail of his life. His devotion to God and service to others became the prevailing characteristics of his life; he was poured out as an oblation on behalf of the Church. It seems very evident that it was the hungering and thirsting to know him and his prompt obedience which opened the windows of Heaven and brought abundant blessings all through his ministry, even though it was filled with trials and difficulties from beginning to end, and he was able to say “for our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Such a life is like the High Priest’s two hands full of sweet incense crumbled upon the golden altar with the smoke of sweet perfume ascending and penetrating beyond the second veil into the Most Holy—the Divine Presence.

To know him is very different from knowing *of* him; so many can say they know of Jesus but not so many are able to bear testimony to knowing him with close personal contact and association. To really know a person we must understand him, instinctively discern his wish and will, know his trend of thought, be acquainted with his ways, be conversant with his purposes, be accustomed to his tastes and choice and be able to express his judgement generally. To do this we must enjoy close acquaintance, spend time in his presence and share in joys and trials, activities and experiences. It is by these same means that we can enjoy close relationship and sweet knowledge of Christ. We have long since come to an understanding of God in a very real and definite sense; we know his mind, thoughts and purposes respecting ourselves and the world from his sacred word and we have a unique and favoured position before God in the world today. Not only do we possess the Bible and freedom to use it but we live in a time when the sacred secrets of the mysteries of God and his Kingdom are clearly and beautifully unfolded. The great fundamental truths are made so luminous that if our heart is attuned to know him it is not such a colossal task as others had in past days; such light has been shed on the ransom, resurrection, restitution, the last days, and the conditions obtaining in them, that we have wonderful knowledge and an accumulation of evidence for our guidance and instruction in knowing Christ; yet we have found that much of this can be appreciated without vital life in Christ. These things take their place and give increased responsibility to every one of us and it seems right to say that we cannot know Christ to any great extent not be accepted of him without some measure of appreciation of these great and precious revealed truths concerning God’s plans. To know him we need to be influenced by his word, to walk in his light and to be taught of him. Life that endures is nourished and built up by the Word of God. “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life.” These will enable one to increase in the knowledge of God; not necessarily to understand all the intricate problems of human nature but anticipate their solution in the purposes of God. In this we can rejoice and give praise and honour and glory to him. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight.” (Jer. 9. 23-24). “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17. 3)

(From “B.S.M.”)

## **The Characteristics of Christian Discipleship**

*MATT 5:1-12)*

The Beatitudes, as they are usually called, are descriptions given in an exclamatory form of the qualities, all of which must be found, and in fact are found in and in varying degrees, in the lives of those who have come under the influence of the kingly rule of God. They are also a declaration of the blessings which all who display those virtues: experience already in part, and will enjoy more fully hereafter. The future tense used in the description of those blessings in verses 5-9 emphasise their certainty and not merely their futurity. The mourners will indeed be comforted, etc. The beatitudes in Matthew would appear to be eight in number, for in verse 11 Jesus abandons the exclamatory form. 'How blest are' and addresses the disciple's directly in the words *Blessed are ye*. The eight qualities here set forth, when blended together (and no single one of them can in fact exist in isolation from the others) make up the character of those who alone are accepted by the divine: King as His subjects (3, 10), who alone can see Him who is invisible (8), and who alone are worthy to be His sons (9). In consequence, anyone who claims to be God's son, or to know Him, or to belong to His kingdom, or to be a Member of His body, the Church, in whom these qualities are conspicuous by their absence, 'is a liar and knows not the truth'. Many of these qualities had already been counted blessed by the psalmist. It is the assembly of them by Jesus, so that they form a kind of mosaic of the Christian character, that is His unique contribution. ( R. V. G. Tasker, T.N.T.C.)