

He Who Overcomes Will Inherit These Things

Dear David and Barbara,

Shalom! It was with great joy that I heard of your immersion into the life of our Master Yahshua, especially since I could appreciate from my personal experience some of what you had to overcome. Before my wife and I came to Messiah, we had been Christians for fifteen years, and for several years I had been a pastor in the Assemblies of God. Although we had conviction of our own need to be saved, and faith that we had truly met our Master Yahshua in His people, it was some time before we had confidence to answer the many perplexing questions that the confusion of Christianity raises, to which our old friends and family were quick to demand answers.

But regardless of our background, for each one who chooses to follow Messiah there is by necessity a great overcoming, as our Master said in Rev 21:7, "**He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.**" And the "these things" He is speaking of is clear from the previous verse: "*I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.*" So it is the free gift of eternal life that is given to the one who "overcomes." It is the same thing our Master was offering to the woman at the well in John 4:13,

Yahshua answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

You and I were both still thirsty, weren't we? So it is clear that we had never drunk from the spring of the water of life, for our Master said that whoever drinks of this water will *never* thirst again. But we were still thirsty, and we heard the Shepherd's voice (John 10:27) through His people, saying, "Come!"

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17)

But while the gift of eternal life is free, it is our response to the invitation, "**Come!**" that requires the overcoming, for the evil prince of this world does not easily let go of any who attempt to make the transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. To leave one domain and enter the other takes violence, the forceful action of our spirit driving our will to overcome everything that would hold us back. There is no birth, either natural or spiritual, that does not require great force to make the transition through the birth canal, and the newborn son always arrives naked and crying on the other side, where he is soon fed and clothed and comforted.

In Matthew 11:12, our Master said, "*From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*" And in Luke 16:16 it reads, "*The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.*" What shall we do with these words of our Master? Was He overstating things or exaggerating? It didn't require great forcefulness on our part to become Christians. The only "overcoming" we had to do was to raise our hand at the "altar call" and perhaps step into the aisle and come forward to be led in the "sinner's prayer." There was nothing to give up or leave behind except perhaps our immorality.

But we know that a person must *force* his way into the kingdom, squeezing to get through the narrow gate, giving up his life and possessions, family, job, security, religious concepts, etc. He must recognize all who oppose him in this as his enemies (Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53). He must cut off opposing family and "friends" with the same violence of spirit that was required of the Levites in Exodus 32:26-29 (Luke 14:26). It requires spiritual conflict, warfare with the flesh, violence to overcome all the opposing forces of death that would prevent him from breaking free from the prince of this world.

So it is that the apostle John said,

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

The miracle of faith is that the one who is willing to do the Father's will (John 7:17) receives the sent one who is doing the Father's will (verse 18) and *believes* Him who sent him, and *fusion* happens (1 Cor 6:17). He hears the Shepherd's voice from the lips of the sent one (Rom 10:14-17), and he receives the *faith* by which he can *overcome* the world.

This is why the one who *overcomes* in Rev 21:7 is contrasted with the *cowardly and unbelieving* one in verse 8, who shrinks back from facing everything he must press through in order to enter the kingdom of God. Regardless of what he believes in his mind, he proves that he is not willing to do the Father's will by his lack of courage to do what is required to become a disciple (Luke 14:33). His "belief" did not convince our Master, who was therefore unwilling to entrust His Holy Spirit to this "believer" (John 2:23-25), as He only gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

Our Master knew the hearts of those religious leaders he was speaking to in Luke 16:16, when he spoke of forcing one's way into the kingdom:

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."

One could think, taking verse 16 by itself, that our Master was presenting "the gospel of the kingdom of God" as a replacement for "the Law and the Prophets," except that He said verse 17 in the very same breath: "*But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.*"

The Pharisees He was speaking to prided themselves in keeping the Law and held strict observance of the letter of the Law over the heads of those who didn't have the natural strength to keep it. But John came preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, saying that in spite of all of their outward conformance, the axe was laid at the root of their tree, for it was not *bearing the fruit* that would prove that the law of God was written in their hearts. The "good news" was that *grace* was coming to do this very thing — to write the law of God in the hearts of those who were truly willing to do His will (Jer 31:31-33). But this "law" that He would write in their hearts was the *same* law that He had given them on stone tablets. Instead of having it in their minds and beating one another over the head with it, they would have it in their hearts so that they would learn to love the things He loves and hate the things He hates. This is what the apostle Paul was saying in Rom 8:3-4,

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Our Master did not come to do away with the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17-19), and obviously Paul understood that it would be fulfilled in *us*, His Body. The Law is *good*, Paul says (Rom 7:12), but it is *spiritual* (verse 14). It is not to be discarded, nor is it to be applied by dead principle, but by the Spirit He has given us. Because we love our Father, we obey His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22) — things that go beyond the commandments, because He is revealing His heart to us. We have our Master's anointing that teaches us *all things* (1 John 2:27), just as the Samaritan woman at the well rightly expected the Messiah would do (John 4:25).

I don't know about you, but as a Christian I was always very insecure with the almost complete abandonment of the Old Covenant, considering that it was the only Bible that our Master and the early disciples had.

Whenever the New Testament records the apostles speaking of the "Word of God" it is the Old Testament they were referring to, not the New Testament, which didn't take shape as a recognized volume until most of them were long dead. Whenever the apostles preached the gospel, they made constant reference to what was spoken by the Prophets, as they were convinced that what was happening in their midst was the fulfillment of what they read in the Prophets.

When I first met the Community, several of the brothers were helping me to see that the "church" could not be the "church" if it was not a fulfillment of what the prophets foretold about the New Covenant and what Messiah would cause to happen on the earth. It was a new thought to me, and I spent the next month or two reading

Isaiah through Malachi, comparing their prophetic hope and vision with what passes for the “church” today. It totally exposed the confusion and worldliness of Christianity as being utterly divorced from the Spirit that was speaking in those prophetic writings. It helped explain the reason for the shallowness and superficiality of Christianity as I knew it — it was not connected to the holy root, the faith of Abraham.

During that time of my life I was working as a computer consultant in Lausanne, Switzerland, living a life of great material comfort, but completely void of purpose. My family had two almost completely distinct circles of friends — the Christians we knew from the churches we attended while living in Geneva, Lausanne, and Munich, and the families of the men I had worked with in the companies that hired me as a consultant. We began to notice that there was little if any difference in the quality of life and moral character between these two circles of friends, nor were the children of these families significantly different in their behavior or interests. If anything, the warmth of hospitality of the work-related friends was greater than that of the Christians.

When we returned from our first amazing visit to the Community in Sus and announced to our friends that we were giving up everything to follow Messiah (or in practical terms, to join this community), they were all quite alarmed. But as the weeks went by before we could settle all of our affairs and disentangle ourselves from our former life, it was very revealing to see a surprising difference emerge between our two circles of friends. Our work-related friends wished us well and several of them told us that if anything went wrong and we regretted our decision, to call on them and they would take us into their own homes and help us to get back on our feet financially. However, our Christian friends only warned us that we were probably joining a cult and urged us to set aside some of the money we had earned in Switzerland just in case things didn’t work out the way we hoped. In that moment I had revelation of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Surely some of their friends had come to them in the same way as our Christian friends came to us, warning them to set aside some of the price from the sale of their property, just in case they changed their minds about this community. In this way they failed to overcome the world, for they lacked the faith to totally trust Messiah in His people. They were not violent to cut off everything that would tie them to their former life. They loved their life, so they lost it

I am so thankful that we received the faith to overcome all the pressure that came against us and to press through the narrow gate. It has been nine years since we first came, and so far none of our friends or family have followed us into the Kingdom, and only a few have visited. We have watched sadly as so many of our old Christian friends have suffered the ravages of the world, becoming more and more materialistic and their children more and more worldly. Meanwhile we have experienced the joy of watching our own children prosper and the older ones follow us into the covenant, maintaining their purity and surpassing us in their simplicity of devotion to Messiah. Our Master Yahshua and His wonderful people have been faithful to us, and we are eternally grateful.

Well, I hope this letter has encouraged you. Please feel free to write to us! We love you and look forward to meeting you some day!

Shalom,
David Zerubbabel & Neshef