

## Overcoming

***These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. — John 16:33 (NASB)***

Life is full of problems. Many obstacles present daunting challenges to us. Consider Job's words: "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," (Job 5:7); and, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not," (Job 14:1-2). Your list of obstacles may differ from your friends' lists. Still, anyone may fall prey to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life," (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15-16; cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:12).

Each of us has weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Some, like dishonorable feelings toward others, are wrong in themselves. For some people the temptation may be toward an addiction. But for others, the "tender spot" may be a proneness to depression. Another may be so timid that the world seems a threatening and fierce environment. How does Jesus help us to overcome these? Is this even what He meant when He spoke these words to the apostles? Rather, He was pointing to the truth that, no matter life's hardship, Christians should find peace in the eventual triumph of the faithful with their Lord (Rev. 17:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:8, Rev. 21:4 etc.). These bring a measure of comfort; but they do not eradicate all pain.

Some people teach, in essence, that the more perfect our faith, the fewer and less significant our flaws. If the flaw is spiritual or moral, this is partly true. But simply being profoundly affected by life's troubles does not diminish the depth of one's spiritual character. God gave us our ability to feel; He also gave us the power to think.

Through history, God has used people of a wide variety of personalities to accomplish His will. Weeping Jeremiah, fiery John the immerser, quiet Abigail—all served the Lord faithfully with the abilities they were granted—and despite their weaknesses. Esther had to summon strength from within merely to speak to the King, her unpredictable and powerful husband. Some "overcoming" must transpire for us to be useful. But the personality traits are not inherently "unholy" or a sign of flagging faith.

I heard a beloved preaching brother, whose recent life has been shattered by tragedy, argue that weak emotions, not sufficiently trusting in God's promises, are a primary source of human sadness and despair. He seemed to say that if only his soul could see things from God's point of view he could dismiss his personal disappointments. ***I am grateful that God is more compassionate toward us than my friend is toward himself!***

Rather our challenge is to "bend without breaking." Like a tree violently inclined by the force of wind or an ice storm, our flexibility lends us strength and the ability to endure. Insight into the nature of life—that it was never intended to be without hardship—helps us to see the need to overcome despite the hurdle. Perhaps that is the "God's-eye" point of view that we need to emphasize. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world," (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4).

Remember—you are loved.

— Philip