

## THE POWER OF FAITH.

"This is the victory [the conquering power] that overcometh the world, even our faith." – *1 John 5:4.* –

BLESSED are the overcomers! "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.

What a reward is this which is held out as an incentive and inspiration to urge us on to noble and heroic effort! – to reign with Christ, to be his bride and joint-heir, his beloved and confidential companion through all eternity, and to be partakers of his divine nature and glory. These promises are freighted with an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which "eye [R1719 : page 329] hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man; but God hath revealed it unto us [brought it within the range of our appreciation] by his spirit." The words sound hollow and meaningless to those who have no appreciation of spiritual things, but to the consecrated children of God who are faithfully striving to meet the conditions upon which the fulfilment depends, and who have therefore a good hope, they are exceeding precious, and fill their hearts with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But between the present time and the realization of the promises there lies the necessity of *overcoming*. The word is strongly suggestive of a great conflict, and calls to mind also the Apostle Paul's expressions – "*Fight the good fight* of faith;" "*Endure hardness* as a good *soldier* of Christ;" "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men, be strong.*" To overcome requires energy, force of character, perseverance and steadfast, patient endurance to the very end of the present life.

In the above text the Apostle John points to the only power which can sufficiently energize our whole being and nerve to patient endurance of tribulation, even to the end. That conquering power is *faith*. "Now," says the Apostle Paul, "faith is a basis of things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen." Faith is not merely belief or knowledge, but is knowledge applied, assimilated, appropriated – made a part of our habit of thought, a basis for our actions and a spur to all our energies. Such a faith is the overcoming power which all must have who would run successfully the race for the prize of our high calling, and be overcomers.

What is it that is to be overcome? John briefly comprehends it all in the expression, "*the world*." Then the whole world is against us in this battle. Yes, its spirit, its popular methods, its ambitions, ideas, hopes and aims are all at variance with the elect Church of God, who are not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. The world is taking its own course, ignoring God, leaning to its own understanding and pursuing its own way. Consequently, our course is in direct opposition to that of the world, and we must pull hard against the current of the world's spirit which is deeply inwrought in our old nature, as well as surrounding us on every side. Yes, it is a hard pull; and we need all the inspiration and energy that faith can impart to accomplish it.

It is important, too, to see that our faith is a correct faith; for if the faith be an erroneous one, inspiring false and delusive hopes built upon sandy foundations, the stronger this impelling power becomes, the more surely and quickly will it drive its deluded victim to shipwreck upon the rocks. Faith, like steam in an engine, is a power either for good or for evil. Hence the importance of a correct faith.

It was because of this importance of faith, and of recognition of it as the motive power, either for good or for evil, that the Apostle Paul was so solicitous for the continuance of his converts in the faith. (See 1 Thes. 3:2,5,6,7,10.) He urged all to examine and prove themselves, whether they were in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved

away from the hope of the gospel, but rooted and built up in Christ and *established* in the faith; and to beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 1:23; 2:7,8.) He was deeply solicitous, too, that the faith of the Church should not stand in the wisdom (the vain philosophies) of men, but in the power of God. And, therefore, in his preaching, he did not launch out into foolish speculations or follow his own or any other men's reasonings, and so pander to the popular craving for something new; but he confined himself to the expounding of the sacred Scriptures and to exhortations, inspired, as they were, by the revelations made to himself – a prophet, as well as an apostle. – 1 Cor. 2:4,13; 2 Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11,12; 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:15,16.

Let us see, then, that we have the faith of Christ – the faith well founded in the Word of God, a faith examined and proved, deeply rooted [R1720 : page 329] in the heart as well as in the head, and therefore *established* as the motive power of life. Such a faith is not nervously looking about for something new, and always probing the vain philosophies of men to see how skilfully they [R1720 : page 330] can withstand the Word of the Lord; for those who do so show plainly that their faith is not of sufficient influence to be the moving power in them, impelling them onward to full and complete victory over the world.

Faith, to be a conquering power in us, must go deeper than the head: it must go into the heart, and thus permeate and energize the whole being, bringing not only the outward conduct but every thought into subjection to Christ. Then indeed will faith impel to action, to works which clearly manifest it; for "faith without works is dead." A mere intellectual assent to the truth of God, which does not lead to activity in his service, is not faith, and can never overcome the world nor secure the prize of our high calling. But this is the conquering power that overcometh the world, even our faith. Let us examine ourselves and see that we have it pure and simple, and deeply inwrought in the fiber of

our character, and that as an energizing principle it is moving us to faithful and persevering activity. Let it be the governor and inspiration of our lives – a living faith which purges and purifies and strengthens to diligence and patience to the end of the narrow way to life.

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