

## OVERCOMING DESIRES FOR EARTHLY THINGS

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." – 1 Cor. 9:27.

THE Apostle Paul is here using the illustration of a race-course. In certain races there are what are called handicaps; that is, one who is weaker is given a certain allowance of time in starting, and is granted a victory if he gets in on time. That would be an accommodation for only a few. It is called a handicap from the standpoint of the others. But in the Christian race there is accommodation granted to all; for there is none perfect – all come short of the glory of God, and we could never gain any reward that God has offered, had it not been for the satisfaction which the Redeemer has made.

Yet it is also true in this race that some have more allowance than others. Those who have many weaknesses have a corresponding allowance of grace made for them; and those who have fewer weaknesses have a less allowance. "I therefore so run, not as *uncertainly*," said St. Paul. He was *fully determined*. He had a *definite goal* in view, and meant to *win*. This is the only attitude, if we would gain the prize that God has offered us; and the whole matter is dependent upon our zeal, our faithfulness and our earnestness.

The Greek games had other exhibitions of strength and agility besides racing. There were contests with wild animals, in which a man would attempt to slay an animal. Then there were others between men, in which a man would attempt to deal his antagonist a vital blow, if possible, with his brass knuckles. In preparation for this contest, the contestants had a wind bag to practise on. But this was not the real battle, it was merely the preparation.

So the Apostle says that he was not using his strength merely in *practise*. He was trying to *do* something. He was fighting a real battle. What battle was it? The answer of the Bible is that a great battle began away back in the days when Satan became the Adversary of God. Our first parents came into slavery to Satan, and later some of the angels fell. Now many are fighting, and some are thoroughly ignorant of whose side they are fighting for. Those who are fighting for unrighteousness are on Satan's side. Whoever is fighting for moral reforms, etc., is on God's side, rather than the side of the Enemy of mankind.

The world are fighting more or less – some more intelligently, some less intelligently. There are in every army some who could not tell you what the fight is about. So now, many do not know that a battle is being waged between Righteousness and Sin. The millionaires have their own battles and contentions; and the little store-keepers have their battles, in competition with the larger merchants. The attorney has his battles. He may sometimes take a case that is on the side of justice, and defend it with zeal; and again he may take a case that is on the side of injustice, and prosecute it with equal zeal. But the world do not recognize the real battle. The same man may be on the right side one day, and on the wrong side the next day.

The Apostle had enlisted under the true banner. Christ lifted up a standard in opposition to Satan, and He will yet win a glorious victory on the very field where Sin has reigned for six thousand years. He had a personal conflict with the powers of darkness, in which He was Victor. And His victory was gained by His overcoming His own natural desires, and fully submitting Himself to the will of God. This was the only condition on which He could be exalted from the earthly state, to the glories of the Divine nature. He has met the required condition, of dying the Just for the unjust, and has gotten the great victory over Satan.

The Heavenly Father, in harmony with His own arrangement, has empowered the Lord Jesus to take out from the world a company to lay down their lives with Himself, during a time when everything seems contrary, when evil seems to triumph more frequently than do righteousness and justice. These, walking by faith, and not by sight, are to lay down their lives for the sake of righteousness, to carry out the purposes of God.

### **OUR PRIMARY BATTLE IS WITH SELF**

Do we ask, Whom, or what, shall we fight? The answer is that one would not enter the real conflict at all, [R5778 : page 297] if he should follow the impulses of his own mind. In such case he would not have any part in this fight. He might engage in the ordinary battling of the world – sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong. But if he would get into this company which is being guided by Jesus, he must come unto God by Him, and must sacrifice earthly hopes, aims and ambitions, and walk in Jesus' footsteps – steps of suffering unto death. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10.) Thus the battle begins in our mind, our will. We submit our mind to the mind of Christ.

In the typical Day of Atonement sacrifices, the Body of Christ is represented by the Lord's goat. And as the high priest killed the goat in the type, so in the antitype the animal nature is to be killed, slaughtered, sacrificed. It is not to be yielded up to *sin*, but to be *overcome*. The New Creature is in mortal combat with entrenched sin, and the cravings of the human nature. He has made a consecration of himself to God. And as a result, the Advocate has placed His own merit upon the consecrated one. When this is done, the battle immediately begins, that the New Creature may keep down the old creature, the old will. – Galatians 5:17.

The Apostle says, "I keep my body under,...lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." It must be a *real* battle, a *real* conflict; for the victory is only to those who *overcome*. "To him that overcometh...will I give power over the nations"; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne." – Rev. 2:26,27; 3:21.

## **VICTORY OR DEATH!**

This battle, then, that begins at the time of our consecration, continues until the end – our death. It will be the death either of the New Creature or of the old creature. So far as our earthly interests are concerned, we sacrifice them fully – we exchange them for the opportunity of gaining glory, honor, immortality, joint-heirship with the Lord, participation in the Divine nature. So, as the Apostle suggests, we are not to be expending our strength merely on a bag of wind, but we are to fight to some purpose.

"For me to live is Christ," says the Apostle; and for me to *lose* in this battle is for me to perish as a New Creature, and this means that the Second Death would be mine. We should realize that in our position as Christians our eternal interests are at stake. We fear of losing the eternal life, which we shall surely lose if we fail to be overcomers.

The Apostle Peter writes, "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness;...that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless!" (2 Peter 3:11,14.) With this anticipation, how serious life should be!

The Christian who knows about these things of the future, and who lives in anticipation of them, has a joy and a peace of which the world knows nothing. One week of such living is worth more than an entire lifetime with only such things as the world has to offer. And if now we enjoy living the new life, and entering by

faith into the things that the Lord has in reservation for us, what will be the *realization!* If we would lose much in the present time by losing our hope and faith, what would it be to lose these things eternally!

As we realize this, we see that we cannot afford one moment of carelessness. The man engaged in combat with the animal knows that the bruised and wounded animal seeks to kill him. So the Apostle tells us, the *old nature* strives to kill the *New Nature*. Therefore the New Nature must see to it that it uses all its strength to gain the victory. The Lord has promised us grace sufficient for every time of need. If we are overcome by the old nature, it will not be because we have not strength sufficient for the victory; for if we call upon the Lord, He will sustain us. But the Lord will test our loyalty, our faith, our strength of character, our alertness of mind. And the victory is sure, so long as our trust is in Him!

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