OVERCOMING THE WORLD

By the Rev. J. H. Jowett

"These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33.

"I HAVE overcome the world." And yet could there be anything more suggestive of failure than the circumstances in which these words were spoken? Treachery had broken out in the disciple band. Judas had gone out bent upon the malign purpose of selling [illegible]d. A mob was even now assembling to drag him to judgment, and Calvary, and death. And it was in conditions like these that the Master proclaimed his triumph!

And who was the conqueror? A poor Galilean peasant, speaking a provincial accent, obscure and uninfluential, having no place to lay his head! Let me say it again, he is about to be betrayed, to be deserted, to be put to the most contemptuous and humiliating death! And yet this man claims to be wearing the purple of sovereignty, to be trailing mystic clouds of glory even while he was marching to the tomb! He had not gone down before the world, he had not shared its tone, he had not been infected by its contagion, he had not bowed to its compromises, he had not been ensnared by its seductions, he had not sunk to its degradations. He had "overcome the world." Let us contemplate the prominent features of the victory.

He had overcome the smiles of the world. And that is ever the subtlest and most paralyzing of all enticements. If we can make comparisons between the different moments in Christ's life, one would say that the peril was greater when they "took him by force to make him a king" than when "all men forsook him and fled." Many a man can keep his moral health in defeat who is overcome with success. An illustration can be found on the public platform. Every public man knows that there is nothing so insidious as the snare of applause. A man can walk the narrow way when he is confronted by a hostile audience, but he is in great jeopardy when he is met by nothing but cheers. It is then he is liable to be "carried away" by the enthusiasm into grave imprudences. Ben Jonson used to say that "of all wild beasts, preserve me from the tyrant; and of all tame beasts, a flatterer." I suppose that the culminating point of temptation in the life of the apostle Paul was not when he encountered the violence of the mob at Lystra, but when the people magnified his importance and declared that "the gods are come down" in the guise of men. Now, the Lord met this seductive smile of the world, and did not succumb to it. He was not deluded into a shining servitude.

Superior to World's Suspicions.

And Jesus had overcome the suspicions of the world. There is something very affrighting in the contemplation of an untrue eye. Men are frequently overcome by the malicious eyes of their fellows. And this was the kind of "look" which was ceaselessly fixed upon the Lord. "And they watched him!" It is the kind of sight which misinterprets all it sees. It imputes ill motives and turns everything awry. Before that kind of onslaught many men succumb. They are driven from the post of duty by malicious tongues; they retire from the fight. A man said in my hearing some little while ago that "public life has become intolerable," and that he was determined to retire into privacy. And this man allowed the world to drive him from the field of service. But that was not the way of the Master. He would not turn back because men men fixed upon him an evil eye. He would not turn aside from the appointed way because of the unfriendly gaze of his enemies. He stood up, and strode on, unaffrighted and undeterred by malice and frown.

And he overcame the contempt of the world. Many a man can bear a wrong who cannot bear an insult. Our Lord was "despised." "He hath a devil and is mad." He was denied common courtesy. He was refused the ordinary amenities of hospitality. There was no water for him when he came in from the dusty way. There was no kiss of recognition and welcome. "He was despised and rejected of men." And yet he was not unmanned by the contempt. It did not make him hard, unforgiving, resentful, and revengeful. It did not turn him sour. He was not overcome by the treatment. He went through it in sovereign and unimpaired health and holiness. All these antagonisms, arising from smiles, and frowns, and contempts, and neglects, he faced and conquered. And in what disposition was the triumph won? He overcame the world by a refusal to stoop to use the powers of the world. He would never use the world's sword. He would never use the fires of persecution. He never put his hand to mere coercives and compulsions. He sought spiritual ends by spiritual means, and he never sought to elicit the aid of unworldly kings. Herod sought his friendship, "He was desirous to see him of a long season," but the Lord refused the intercourse, and "He answered him nothing."

He overcame the world by a calmness that was nourished in heavenly places. He never exposed himself to the peril of feverishness and passion. In the moments of temptation he retired to the mount. Even in the midst of the crowd he had quiet communion with the eternal. He knew how to make a solitude even in the very heart of publicity. He could make a sanctuary amid the very clamor of the market-place. And so he kept his spirit cool, and the perilous fire was never kindled. "I am not alone, the Father is with me."

He overcame the world by a patience which waited for the hour to strike, and which would not be hustled into premature action. One of the first temptations with which the devil assails a man is in the attempt to prove to him that his noble purpose is infamous, or needless, or impossible. If he fails in this temptation he proceeds on quite another tack. Seeing that we are immovable in our resolve, he next attempts to make us precipitate in its execution. "Don't wait," he says. "Get it over at once!" And so we are frequently "rushed," and the holy purpose is spoiled by its lack of holy restraint. Jesus refused to be rushed. "Mine hour is not yet come!" He waited 30 years before beginning his ministry, and there is a wonderful sense of quiet leisureliness about him characterizing even his public life. He waited for the clock to strike, and when it had struck he acted, and never swerved. And he conquered the world by a love that flowed fresh and full to the very end of his days. Even Calvary did not embitter his spirit! Even the shadow of death did not sour his soul by the sense of defeat. The reviling of those who passed by the cross brought no cynical response. And so he died, a conqueror in dying, having overcome the world in the very moment when it seemed the world was most triumphant.

Finding the Perfect Peace.

Now we have to face the same antagonisms. "In the world ye have tribulation." We have to be in the same straits. We have to encounter the perils of the smile, and the frown, and the contempt, and the suspicion, and the neglect. We, too, have to pass from shine into shadow, and to face the menace of the sword and the seductions of the crown. "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." But what is that to thee and me? It is everything to thee and me. There is power in the Lord's conquest to make conquerors of all. "In me ye may have peace." Not in ordinances, not in bare religious exercises, not in human fellowship, not in nature's oratory; these may all be helpful means, but they are not radical and ultimate. The deep fundamental peace is to be found only in Christ. "In me ye may have peace," but to be in Christ is to be more than a companion. Earthly relationships supply no word sufficiently intimate and immediate. It is nearer than linked arms and clasped hands; it is the inconceivable union of oneness of spirit. It is the union of the branch with the vine. Our lives can become embedded in the Lord, and his conquering energies, like rising sap, will fill our moral and spiritual powers, until we, too, become triumphant. We become more than conquerors through him that loves us. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—The Standard.

Sowing for Eternity.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand."—Eccl. xi. 6.

It is a law of the harvest that we reap more than we sow. Then how careful ought we to be of the seed we are sowing day by day, if we would reap a rich harvest of golden grain for the Master. Very much depends upon the manner in which the seed is sown, and the fertility of the soil to receive the seed, that it may take deep root and spring up and remain productive. In nature, like produces like, often in tenfold ratio. In grace, the seed sown sprang up and brought forth some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold. Are we sowing constantly what it will be our joy and pleasure to reap in the vast eternity that lies before us all?

Being Through Doing.

It is a great deal more important to do right than it is to want to do right, or to enjoy right. The only people who really hunger and thirst after righteousness are the people who are practicing righteousness. The desire comes from the practice, not the practice from desire. Enjoyment is a chief consideration in the playing of games, yet in any game of real skill there is little enjoyment until one has worked at the game enough to master its first principles. Right living demands skill; why should we think that enjoyment can come more easily here than in the playing of a game? It is proper to ask God to create in us the desire for his will, but it is also necessary to recognize that he answers that prayer chiefly for those who are doing his will.

Willing Doers of His Word.

Foolish is the man who holds back when God is calling to him to come on. It is always safe to follow a Providential leading, and it is never safe to refuse such divine guidance. Every Christian man should properly be a pathfinder, along some road of progress which will, if pursued, advantage humanity. When Jehovah would send him abroad on errands of ministry to mankind let no Moses hang back. Means and strength to perform the mission will in due time be provided by the Lord for those who as faithful servants strive to do his bidding. Let us each be willing doers of his word.

The religion we most like to recount may be that which does not count at all.

AT FIRST SIGHT.

He—Rosalie, I can't tell you how I worship your almond eyes, your velvet cheeks, like peaches, and your cherry lips!

Rosalie—I suppose you are the new gardener.

Hubby Was Too Willing.

In the midst of her tears over a late disagreement she announced that she would take a trip of three weeks in the country for a rest from his abuse.

Hooray! Hooray!

He hurried to the station, bought tickets, hurried back home, pulled off his coat, plunged into the cellar, lugged out her trunks and commenced to pack.

Lying on a couch, she watched him through her tears with great curiosity. From time to time, in reply to many questions, she advised him what articles would be useful in the country, and they were eagerly included.

Perspiring and exhausted after some hours of preparatory detail for her departure, he sank into a chair and said:

"Everything is ready now. You have abundant time to catch your train."

"I have decided," she said, softly, "not to go."

Ready with Explanation.

A rector of Eltham once gave out the words: "Who art thou?" and, as he paused for a moment, an officer in uniform, who had just entered the church, suddenly halted, and taking the question as personal, promptly replied: "Sir, I am the recruiting-officer of the Sixteenth Foot, and, having my wife and daughter with me, should be glad to make the acquaintance of the clergy and gentry of the neighborhood."

Eve's New Costume.

"Oh, dear!" said Eve, after she had secured all the best fig leaves there were to be had, "I'm so unhappy."

"Come, dear, cheer up," replied Adam. Things might be worse than they are. We still have each other."

"Yes, but now that I've got to wearing clothes there's no other woman with whom I can talk about them."—Chicago Record-Herald.

The Doctor's Fault.

Judge—I am led to understand you stole the watch of the doctor who had just written a prescription for you at the free dispensary. What have you to say to this charge?

"Well, your honor, I found myself in a desperate quandary. His prescription said 'a spoonful every hour,' and I had no timepiece.."

Always at It.

Mrs. Benham—Woman's work is never done.

Benham—That's so; even after she is married she is trying to make men fall in love with her.

Once in a while you encounter one of those cheerful individuals who never borrow trouble, in spite of the fact that they borrow everything else.

A woman may be as old as she looks, but it makes a difference whether it's before or after she is dressed to go out.

A woman dislikes being jealous almost as much as she likes making some other woman jealous.

The bravest dentist isn't anxious to look into the jaws of death.

One man's hobby may be another man's nightmare.

When some people talk it is a waste of time to yawn.

WAS A CASE OF EMERGENCY

Here, if Ever, Was a Time When Telegraphic Limitations Were to Be Deplored.

Wilbur Wright was discussing in Dayton a very imaginative magazine story about aeroplanes.

"The story," he said, "was full of errors. Aeroplanes can't do what this chap claims. He doesn't understand them.

"In fact, he's like old George Kettle of Trotwood. George rushed into the Trotwood telegraph office the other day with a small package wrapped in a newspaper under his arm.

"'Telegraph this to my wife down to Dayton, Harvey,' he said to the telegraph clerk, thrusting the package through the little window.

"'No, no, George; we can't do anything like that,' laughed the clerk.

"'Drat ye,' said George, angrily, 'ye got to do it. It's my wife's teeth.'"

Ship's Figureheads.

Carvings for more than five hundred vessels were made by William Southworth, who recently died at Bath. He made a specialty of the carving of figureheads for many years, and some splendid ones were the product of his skill. The rise of commercialism has blotted out the poetic significance of the figurehead and few figureheads are seen nowadays.—Kennebec Journal.

Doing Her Best.

"Kipling says that a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke."

"Well, woman is traveling in the right direction. Haven't you noticed her present panatella shape?"

Then They Came to Blows.

"What started the fight between Lobster and Shrimp?"

"Why, Shrimp called Lobster a 'measley little shrimp,' and he called Shrimp a 'lobster.'"

Would Depend.

She—You've seen Charley's wife. Would you call her pretty?

He—I might if I were talking to Charley.

Compliments should be thoroughly Fletcherized before they are swallowed.

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Some people's morals are like their best clothes—only worn on extraordinary occasions.

Gossips multiply everything they hear by two.