

Who Overcomes

by Tricia Berg

'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.' Revelation 3:21

The Greek word here and in many other verses for overcomes, in its various forms, means:

nikaó: to conquer, prevail

Original Word: νικάω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: nikaó

Phonetic Spelling: (nik-ah'-o)

Short Definition: I conquer, overcome

Definition: I conquer, am victorious, overcome, prevail, subdue.

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have **overcome** the world."* John 16:33

How did Jesus overcome?

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** Philippians 2:5-8*

He overcame by submitting to the will of His Father, no matter how much suffering that entailed. Wow. That as a LOT of suffering, even unto death, and yet He did it willingly, for the sake of the glory of God and for our sake, out of love for us and love for His Father.

*"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But **for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.**" Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine." John 12:27-30*

*"I came to cast fire on the earth, and **would that it were already kindled!** I have a baptism to be baptized with, and **how great is my distress until it is accomplished!**" Luke 12:49-50*

*"**For this reason the Father loves me,** because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.** I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. **This charge I have received from my Father.**" John 10:17-18*

*"The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for **I always do what pleases him.**" John 8:29*

*"For I have come down from heaven, **not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.**" John 6:38*

*"**If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.**" John 15:10*

This next passage is long, but it is important that we grasp the context of some of the applicable verses:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who **for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising***

the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For **the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.**" **It is for discipline that you have to endure.** God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it **yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness** to those who have been **trained** by it. **Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet,** so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and **for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I

tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the **judge of all**, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. **See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.** Hebrews 12:1-29

So just as "victory" was not the way that the disciples had originally thought back then—to take over the world—neither is it now or will it be until the end of this age. The goal is to lay down one's own will and be obedient to God, even unto death if called for. When the disciples supposed that the kingdom of God was about to be established, Jesus gave them instructions to follow in His absence. Jesus is now in that far country where he has received the kingdom, but has not yet returned to rule over it.

*As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman **went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.** Calling **ten of his servants**, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, '**Engage in business until I come.**' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' **When he***

*returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, **'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'** And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 'I tell you that **to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'**" Luke 19:11-27*

As a side note, I believe that the fact that there are ten servants could be related to the fact that ten disciples were present the evening after He rose again when He breathed the Holy Spirit on them. (Judas had killed himself and Thomas was not present until the following week.)

***On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has*

*sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, **he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."** Now **Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." **Eight days later**, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**" John 20:19-29*

I believe that like Solomon in 1Kings 1, Jesus has been crowned King but there is a gap between then to the time when He fully exercises His power and authority. Solomon was crowned king twice—once when Adonijah tried to steal the kingship, and David had Solomon publicly declared king, and once as David's reign was ending and Solomon's reign officially began in earnest. There was great noise and shouting when Solomon rode King David's mule, as there was when Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. There will also be loud jubilation in heaven on a future, glorious day. (Rev. 11:15-18) We were not there when Jesus was first crowned, but we will be for the second time. (1Chron. 29:22-25, Luke 19:35-40, Heb. 2:7-9, Matt. 25:31-46, Rev. 19:11-16)

*The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, **as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.** Revelation 3:21*

Again, this is long, but look at the treasure of information this passage gives us:

*Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, **lest we drift away from it.** For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, **how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?** It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.** For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; **you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.**" Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. **At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.** But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely **Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.** For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing **many sons to glory,** should make the founder of their salvation **perfect through suffering.** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them **brothers,** saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God **has given me.**" Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, **he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.** For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had*

*to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For **because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** Hebrews 2:1-18*

In case anyone does not realize this, Israel claimed to believe in God, to know that they were His special people. Their “unbelief” in the Old Testament was not atheism. It was running after idols instead of putting God first in their hearts and acting on their professed beliefs. It was not trusting Him, but trusting in themselves and each other. It was claiming to believe and yet not obeying. Many times they did obey the letter of the law (to which they wrongly added many details not provided by God) but not the spirit of it. (Matt. 15:7-9, John 4:23) Don't think that all of these things aren't happening in the church today as well!

*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, **who was faithful to him who appointed him**, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been **counted worthy** of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.** Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “**Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘**They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.**’ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away***

from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:1-15

God values humility. (Psalm 147:6, Isaiah 66:2, Daniel 4:37, 10:12, Zeph. 2:3, 3:11-13, Matt. 11:29, 21:5, Luke 1:51-52, 14:7-11, Rom. 12:16, Eph. 4:1-3, 1Pet. 8:12, 5:5) Satan has never understood, or at least cared, about this. (Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:17) That is why he thought it was a good strategy to incite Judas to betray Jesus. (Luke 22:3-6, John 13:27) And what else is that but demonic when the same crowd who shouted "Hosanna to the King" earlier in the week later shouted "crucify him!?" (Matt. 21:9, Mark 15:14) Satan didn't understand what victory looks like to God. Submitting to God is that last thing that would ever cross his mind. It will be the same during the hour of trial, the reign of the beast over the whole world. (Rev. 17:12, Dan. 7:21-22, 11:32-26, Rev. 13:7-10, 14:9-13, 3:10)

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace **to the humble.**" **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.** James 4:4-10*

In Satan's mind, it will look like he is winning by persecuting and killing believers, but he is really losing. He has always tried to win that way. Think of Moses as a baby and also Pharaoh making the Israelites' conditions worse when Moses demanded their freedom, as well as pursuing them after he said they could go, and of Herod trying to kill Jesus as a baby. If he were truthful, Satan would admit that he will not win in the end, but the truth is not in him. (Rev. 12:12, 20:1-3, 7-10, John 8:44)

So overcoming is not accomplished in our own strength, but in God's. A lot of people like to use their weakness as an excuse as to why they can't stop sinning. That is NOT the intended meaning AT ALL! If we have His Spirit within us, because we are born again, then we have the power we need (and when we SLIP, because we all do, there is forgiveness and intercession available to us for ANY sin). If we are still living according to the flesh (without even being honestly grieved by it and struggling against it) instead of walking in the newness of the life God gave us when He regenerated our spirit, then it is because we want to. (Philip. 2:12-13, Romans 6)

Paul's context is that he suffers for Christ in weakness just as Jesus suffered on our behalf in the form of a man (despite having the full nature of God - Col. 1). Read the parables of the minas and talents again to see whether it's true when deceiving people say that God expects nothing of His servants except to CLAIM to believe. (Luke 19, Matt. 25, 1Cor. 6, 1Cor. 15, Gal. 6, James 1, James 2) The fact is that IF we REALLY believe, we will do as He says. (Matt. 10, Luke 6:46-49)

*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through***

Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. *The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 3:3-8*

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.** 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

*For whatever is born of God **overcomes** the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 1 John 5:4*

In other words, there is NO HOPE of overcoming UNLESS we are born again believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It all begins with faith. (Heb. 11:6) John says, as do Paul and James, that we must purify ourselves because of our hope. Our hope of glory is Christ IN us and that He will return for us, whether we have passed on or we still live at that time. (Col. 1:27-29, John 14:2-3, 1Thess. 4:16-18, 1Cor. 15:51-52) He is returning to bring those who love Him to Himself and to reward their faithful service. (Rev. 22:12, 1Cor. 2:19, John 14:15-24) Don't be satisfied with a verse out of context, but look at the surrounding text. Don't claim Philip. 3:20-21 for yourself and reject what immediately preceded it: Philip. 3:17-19. The point is not that we should live in fear, working to earn or keep salvation, but that IF we are born again, TRUE believers, it is a JOY to obey and even to suffer for the glory of our Savior.

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **children of God**; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and **what we will be has not yet appeared; but***

we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that **he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.** By this it is evident who are the **children of God**, and who are the children of the devil: **whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.** 1 John 3:1-10

Therefore, if anyone **cleanses himself from what is dishonorable**, he will be a vessel for honorable use, **set apart as holy**, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and **pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.** 2 Timothy 2:21-22

Religion that is **pure and undefiled** before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to **keep oneself unstained from the world.** James 1:27

Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not **soiled their garments**, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. Revelation 3:4

Whoever takes the mark of and worships the beast during the hour of trial, in order to escape persecution and death, does NOT (and

never will) have their name written in the Book of Life. They will suffer eternal torment. (Rev. 13, Rev. 14) We believers are not subjected to God's wrath, thanks to Jesus taking it ALL upon Himself for us. (2Cor. 5:21, Is. 53) However, we are meant to glorify God and that means we must be purified and refined, being made into the likeness of Jesus. (John 15:8, Rom. 8:17, 8:29, 2Thess. 1, 1Pet. 4:11) God allows trials in our lives to help us grow to maturity—comparable to His tending His vineyard (but trials are not the same as wrath). (John 15, Col. 1) As we rely on and abide in Him, He will help us through it, limiting the trial to what we can endure with His support. (James 1:12-16, Jude 1-24-28, 1Cor. 10:12-13) If we are "led into the wilderness," He is there with us, caring for us. We are never alone. (Rev. 12:6, 13-17, 1 Kings 17:2-6, 17:15-16, Jeremiah 2:2, Deut. 8:16, Gen. 45:4-8) And sometimes people are counted worthy of being given the honor of suffering for Him. (Rom. 5:3, Philip. 2:17, 2Tim. 4:5-8, Acts 5:41, Acts 9:16)

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.** We are **afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11*

There are two resurrections of the dead, and those who lose their lives because of their faithful testimony of Jesus are guaranteed a part in the first resurrection.

*Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of **those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast***

or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. **This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!** Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4-6

(To the Church at Smyrna) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**, and for ten days you will have **tribulation**. Be **faithful unto death**, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who **overcomes** will not be hurt by the **second death**.’ Revelation 2:10-11

Behold, I have **refined** you, but not as silver; **I have tried you in the furnace of affliction**. Isaiah 48:10

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been **grieved by various trials**, so that the **tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or

gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:6-9, 14-19

Paul seems to have been alluding to this when he spoke of doing whatever he could to attain to the resurrection of the dead, and running a good race so as to get the crown. When discussing suffering for Christ, Paul specifically tells Timothy that the hard working farmer deserves the first share of the crops (firstfruits), and tells him that God will make it clear to him. It appears that he was trying to help the reader understand that in order to be part of the firstfruits to God, we must be sincerely willing to suffer as Jesus did. We must **OVERCOME** our own will and submit to God's as His faithful servant and child. (Mark 8:34-38, Gal. 4:3-7, Rom. 8:17, 8:23, Rev. 14:4-5)

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete **exercises self-control in all things**. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an **imperishable**. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But **I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified**. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

***Share in suffering** as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he **competes according to the rules**. It is the **hard-working** farmer who ought to have the **first** share of the crops. **Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything**. 2 Timothy 2:3-7*

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may **gain Christ and be found in him**, not having a*

righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may **know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only **let us hold true to what we have attained.** Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:7-21**

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as **sons**, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be

revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the **sons of God**. Romans 8:13-19

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore **let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured**. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then **let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the **fruit** of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to **do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God**. Hebrews 13:12-16

Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope **without wavering**, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and **all the more as you see the Day drawing near**. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "**The Lord will judge his people.**" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But **recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one**. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need

of endurance, so that when you **have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.** For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but **my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.**" But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:23-39

Only **let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,** so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm** in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For **it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,** engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:27-30

'Nevertheless what you have, **hold fast until I come.** 'He who **overcomes,** and he who **keeps My deeds until the end,** TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Revelation 2:25-29

God is not interested in the kind of faith that is like a vapor that disappears the moment the heat of the sun touches it or even the slightest breeze picks up—the moment any sort of difficulty arises. (1Pet. 1:22-25)

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and **all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.** The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The

*grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the word of our God endures forever.***” Isaiah 40:6-8

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but **whoever does the will of God abides forever.*** 1 John 2:15-17

This is a warning to us all. If we love God, we will obey God. (John 14, John 15, 1 John 2, 1 John 3, 1Thess. 5) If we are His children, then He will discipline us if we do not obey Him. If He does not do so, then we are not His. (Hebrews 12, Romans 8) If we love ANYTHING or ANYONE more than God, then that is an idol and we are disobeying ALL of His commands by getting the very first one wrong. If we do love Him first, then it is not a burden to obey the rest of them (summarized by Jesus and Paul into ONE additional command). We obey because we ARE saved, not in an attempt to save ourselves. (Mark 12:28-25, Rom. 12, Rom. 13:8-10, Heb. 11:6, 1 John 4, 1 John 5:2-3, 2Tim. 2:19-26, 1Cor. 2:9) We are not all given the same gifts and opportunities to serve, but we are to faithfully make the most of what we do have. (Rom. 12, 1Cor. 12, Eph. 4, Luke 12:48, Rom. 3:14-21) Can you imagine doing any less considering the miraculous gift we’ve been given to be adopted as God’s own children? (1John 3)

“Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will touch you. In famine he will deliver you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the wild animals. For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild

animals will be **at peace** with you. You will know that your tent is **secure**; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing. You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth. You will come to the grave in **full vigor**, like sheaves gathered in season. **We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself.**" Job 5:17-27

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him **with their whole heart**, who also **do no wrong, but walk in his ways!** Psalm 119:1-3

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