

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

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MCM

PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years*’ ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,
Archdeacon of Warrington,

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st, 1900.*

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900. [Bishop Ryle died 10th June 1900.]

A PILLAR IN GOD'S TEMPLE

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”—REV. iii. 12.

BRETHREN, the Christian who does not turn to the book of Revelation in his hours of trial is one who misses a great privilege. Glorious things are written *there* for the people of God: *there* is the strong wine of consolation for the heavy in heart; *there* are distant views of the good things prepared for true believers. We seem as we dwell upon it to catch a glimpse of the New Jerusalem; we seem to hear something of that blessed Song of Angels in which the redeemed shall one day join; and little can there be of reality about our religion, if the reading of that book doth not make us more earnest and more spiritual Christians.

Let us try to draw away our minds for a season from earth and fix them on heaven; let us look into the matter of the passage now before us, and consider the eternal rest that remaineth for the children of God.

Now the words of our text were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to the Church of Philadelphia, which was one of the seven famous churches in Asia. To each of these seven we find our great Chief Shepherd sending a word of warning and a word of encouragement; and in each of these seven messages a believer will find something useful to his own soul: seven times over they are commended to our especial notice in the second and third chapters, in this solemn manner: “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Now I see in our text two things—a *character* and a *promise*: the character is, “the man that overcometh,” the promise, “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out”; and these two things by the blessing of God I shall endeavour to set before you in order. Characters and promises are always linked together in Scripture; they must never be separated. Who are those of whom Jesus says, “I will in no wise cast them out”?—they that come unto Him; who are those of whom He declares, “I will give them the water of life”?—they that are athirst; who are those of whom He proclaims, “I will give them rest”?—they that labour and are heavy-laden. And so also it is here: it is the man that overcomes who shall be made a pillar in His temple and no more go out. We press this point upon you, because there are carnal persons who often take to themselves promises to which they have no claim; they feed on Christ’s sweet sayings, but they will not touch Christ’s commands; they forget that characters and promises are like lock and key, they fit one into the other. He that has

not got the character has no part or portion in the promises, for what God has joined together must never be put asunder.

1. First, then, what is the character under which Jesus speaks of a true believer, and gives him encouragement in our text: he is one “that overcometh.”

Overcometh! that is a strong expression, a searching expression, an expression that ought to teach us many things. There must be work to be done, enemies to be conquered, a battle to be fought, a warfare to carry on; all these things must be, or else the Lord Jesus would never tell us that we must overcome.

And, brethren, if ever you would have your souls saved, we tell you plainly there are many adversaries; you must remember you have to contend with bitter foes. There is the old man—your own *natural heart*; you have a disposition which grows and bends of itself towards evil; in your flesh there is no spiritual good thing; the service of God is all against the grain of your mind; you carry that within you which in religion is wicked and deceitful and corrupt. That old man must be fought against. These desires of the flesh must be crushed down. This carnal heart must be changed and made new. But even when changed this heart will need continual mortifying and keeping under; so cold will it sometimes feel, so careless, so dead to heavenly things, so full of vain thoughts, so sleepy and forgetful of God; be sure it will cause you many a painful struggle. No enemy requires such watchfulness as your own heart; one traitor within the camp is more dangerous than an army without; and well does the wise man counsel when he says, “Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of that are the issues of life.” Christian, watch and remember; do not give in to the old Adam, the flesh must be resisted, battled with, and overcome.

And then there is the *world*. You live in the midst of unconverted persons, and how can there be concord and agreement between you and them? Think not that all men will speak well of you, and encourage you if you become Christ’s disciple; you will find at once that you have to swim against the stream. The world’s ways, you will discover, are not your ways, nor the world’s thoughts your thoughts. You may try hard to keep in with the world and yet be a Christian, but it will not do. The friendship of this world, saith Scripture, is enmity with God. You are to be the light in the midst of darkness; you are to be as salt in the midst of corruption; you are to be a witness for Christ and the gospel; and so long as you dwell among the ungodly it is impossible, if you are faithful, that there can be entire oneness and peace. Alas! how many are the occasions on which you must be ready to contend: the fear of this world; the mockery of this world; the vanities of this

world; the over-carefulness of this world; the flattery of this world; the persecution of this world: all these are things against which you must be prepared to fight. Christian, watch and remember—the world must be resisted, battled with, and overcome.

And then there is the *devil*. He is that liar and murderer from the beginning; there is no end to his devices. He has a snare for every age, a pitfall for every circumstance, a trap for every place: snares for the learned and snares for the unlearned; snares for the godly, snares for the profane; rich, poor, master, servant, old, young, he can fit you with every possible temptation for the head, for the heart, for the temper, for the belly, for the tongue. Think not he will always meet you as a roaring lion. He can transform himself into an angel of light; lead you on as he did Eve, little by little, gently and softly, a step at a time, and make you captive unawares if off your guard. Christian, watch and remember; give Satan no vantage-ground for an instant; the devil must be resisted, battled with, and overcome.

Such, then, are our three great enemies—the world, the flesh and the devil. One of two things must happen: they will overcome us, or we must overcome them. Brethren, we desire to urge this point on your attention. We would not have you for a moment suppose that Christ's people have no work to do, that once converted they may live as they please and sleep their way towards heaven. No! far from it. Sleep and carelessness are the marks of impenitence and sin; to be labouring, striving, contending, that is the stamp of a true Christian, that is the proof that you are dead in trespasses no longer. We warn you, therefore, if you would be saved, you must be content to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You must fight the good fight of faith, or you will never lay hold on eternal life. You must make up your mind to a conflict and struggle if you would win heaven; yes, and it is a daily struggle that must be carried on, never will sin be so dead in your members but it will need crucifying and subduing. Never will Satan, the prince of this world, let a subject leave him without throwing every possible obstacle and hindrance in his way. And well does John Bunyan say in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, there is need to cry to the Strong for strength, and when you have got it there is need to use it too.

Think not that we would discourage you, as if this warfare was a burden that none could bear. We only wish you to consider well what you are doing, lest perchance you set forth towards Zion unprepared, and by-and-by turn back offended. We have to tell you of armour, weapons and provision which the great Captain of your salvation will furnish if you will only use them; and we know that they who use them

shall go forward conquering and to conquer. I read of the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, the sword of the word; and these the Holy Spirit will give to all who ask Him. I read of the bread and water of life: he that eats of that bread shall never hunger, and he that drinks of that water shall never thirst; and these the Son of God offers freely to all who will come unto Him. And above all I read of the precious blood of Christ the Lamb of God, in which the worst of sinners are invited to wash and be clean, and before which not all the powers of darkness can stand. This is that blessed means through which all the saints of the most Highest have had victory and triumph. They overcame, I am told in Revelation, by the blood of the Lamb. This blood has been the strength and confidence of all the company of the redeemed. This is the sure title to eternal life which nothing can overthrow; and this title, if you will only believe, shall be your own.

And, brethren, who with all these aids and helps need shrink from the battle? Greater indeed is He that is with you than they that are against you; mighty are your adversaries, but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still. His army, His grace, His Spirit shall bear you up. No man so ungodly in time past but grace can make him a good soldier of Jesus Christ; no woman so weak but faith in her Redeemer shall carry her through to the end. Doubtless you may lose a battle or two, but you shall not lose all; you may faint, but you shall not be quite cast down: watch against sin and sin shall not have dominion over you; resist the devil and he shall flee from you; come out from the world, and the world shall be obliged to let you go, and you shall find yourself in the end more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

Brethren, we would have you pause and consider how much of this warning character belongs to you? We would say to each, Dost thou know anything of this strife against iniquity? Art thou familiar with the shield, the sword, and the battle? Oh! that we could only see more of you engaged in this holy warfare, fighting upwards towards Zion; leaving the vain and unprofitable jangling of talk and controversy; setting your faces steadily towards Jerusalem. Surely there must be something more in religion than a mere profession and a name. There must be actual warfare against sin. There may be short roads to heaven invented by sect and parties; but ancient Christianity, the good old way, is the way of the cross, the way of conflict: no conflict, no victory; no victory, no reward.

Brethren, how are we straitened till we see this decided character in you! how can you suppose without it that the promises of God can be your own?

II. Now what is the special promise of our text: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”

I shall not delay you by dwelling on the first portion of these words—him “will I make a pillar.” The meaning of it is plain. The conquering Christian shall have in heaven an abiding habitation. He shall no more be wavering and tossed on doubt and uncertainties. He shall have a mansion that shall never be taken down, a dwelling that shall be firm and unshaken when the world shall be burned up. And he shall have an honourable place too; fashioned and fitted by the Spirit while on earth, he shall shine as a polished stone in that heavenly temple whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise. But I pass on to the last part of the promise, because of its exceeding sweetness and consolation. In heaven, we are told, the believer shall go no more out.

(a) No more shall he go out from the presence of his Lord. Now are the days of weakness and shortcoming; the best of believers are frail and backsliding compared to what they ought to be. How cold are their prayers, how faint their praises, how dull their affections; how heavy their hands in doing the Lord’s work, how slow their feet in walking in the Lord’s way; how poor is their zeal in fighting the Lord’s battle! Alas! there is not one child of God but could tell you he often finds his sin separating between himself and God. His corruptions seem to rise up as a cloud between him and heaven, and hide the Sun of Righteousness from his eyes. Many is the time that he could say, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—many the time that he humbles himself before his Maker and says with holy David, “I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me; cast me not away from Thy presence, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.”

But all this shall be at an end in heaven. God Himself shall be there with His people and be their God; and sin and the devil shall be without. And there shall be no more trembling and fear of falling; for temptation shall cease, and the former things shall all pass away. Then shall the believer see his Saviour face to face, and know Him at last, even as He has been known; and in His presence there shall be fulness of joy without anything to break it off, and at his right hand shall be pleasures for evermore.

(b) But again. In heaven the believer shall go no more out from the company of his Christian brethren. Here in this world we have often

to walk with God alone. We seem to have none like-minded with whom to take sweet counsel together. We feel cut off and separated from the excellent of the earth in whom we delight; and oh! it is a hard trial to bear—a trial which none but a Christian can understand. We know, indeed, it is for our good. We are naturally selfish, we love to nestle down amidst friends and think only of our private comfort, and this is wrong. We know that God would rather plant us singly up and down in the world as witnesses of the truth, in order that our light may shine before men and make them think. But still, these partings and separations, these rendings asunder and divisions, are a painful thing to flesh and blood, and cost the Christian many a tear. We are journeying the same road, but how little do we see of each other. We are fighting the same battle, but how seldom do we commune with each other to our hearts' full content. But in heaven all this shall be at an end. We shall meet all them that have slept in Jesus, and never be obliged to leave them any more. We shall enjoy the blessed society of all God's children without that bitter thought, "I must soon leave you and go back to my post." We shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. We shall have all our dear brethren in the Lord around us, not one shall be wanting; and none shall hurry us away or make us afraid—for time shall be swallowed up in eternity—and nothing shall be wanting to make our happiness complete.

(c) Once more. In heaven the believer shall no more go out to battle. Here we are continually watching and warring: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Here we cannot put off our armour for a day with safety. We can never say to the sword, "rest and be still." Here we have to keep up a perpetual struggling against sin in every shape. It may be against our neighbour; it may be against those who are near and dear to us. It may be against some whom we naturally love as our own souls. But there shall be an end of this, too, in heaven; there at length the wicked shall cease from troubling, and there the weary shall at last be at rest.

And, brethren, what can we say to you in conclusion? If there be any among you who have friends that died in faith, if you can really feel the departed ones whom you love are with Christ, we bid you to look at the promise of this text, and not to sorrow for them but for yourselves. Their battle is fought, their strife is over. They have passed through that gloomy valley we must one day tread, they have gone over that dark river we must one day cross. They have drunk that last bitter cup which sin hath mingled for us. They have reached the land of everlasting life, where sorrow and sighing are no more. Oh! weep not, then, for them, but for yourselves. We are warring still, but they are at

peace. We are labouring, but they have entered into rest. We are watching, but they are sleeping. We are wearing our spiritual harness, but they have put it off. We are still at sea, but they are safe in harbour. We are sowing, but they are reaping. We have tears, but they have joy. We are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, but as for them they are at home. Oh! better are the dead in Christ than the living, and therefore we bid you weep not for them but for yourselves.

Brethren they are gone before. It is ours to follow after. It is ours to walk in their steps, to show the same faith and patience, to bless God for their good example. But still if you would be with them you must do as all Christ's people have done, you must overcome. "To him that overcometh," said Jesus, "will I give to eat of the Tree of Life"—"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death"—"to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna"—"He that overcometh to him will I give power over the nations"—"he that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment"—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." Brethren, we would have you bear this in mind: you must overcome. There must be nothing sleepy, easy-going, careless, about your Christianity. You must be active, bold, decided on the Lord's side. It is not enough to eat the king's bread and wear the king's livery. You must also fight the king's battles. "Watch ye," therefore, "stand fast, quit you like men," be strong; "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth most easily beset you; and run with patience the race set before you; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith," and to the joy He has prepared for all who love Him. "It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us."