



"We do not err because truth is difficult to see. It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable."

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

05-Apr-13

How Did They Overcome? (Part One)

The [letters to the seven churches](#) in Revelation 2 and 3 contain a number of commonalities. For example, all of the letters come directly from [Jesus Christ](#), and all are written to a messenger of the congregation. Each one begins with a descriptive title of the Speaker, and after this introduction, Jesus immediately says, "[I know your works](#)." Each letter also has a similar conclusion, containing the sentence, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," as well as the phrase, "He who overcomes," followed by a specific promise.

From these repeated elements, we can see that Christ is evaluating the works of His people and that He is keenly interested in whether they overcome. In each message, He promises to reward the overcomers—the conquerors—with blessings far surpassing any material treasure:

- eating from the Tree of Life ([Revelation 2:7](#));
- not being hurt by the [second death](#) ([Revelation 2:11](#));
- having hidden manna to eat and a white stone containing a new name ([Revelation 2:17](#));

- holding power over the nations and receiving the Morning Star ([Revelation 2:26-28](#));
- being clothed in white garments and having one's name secure in the Book of Life ([Revelation 3:5](#));
- being made a pillar in the Temple of [God](#) and receiving the names of God, the New Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ ([Revelation 3:12](#)); and finally,
- receiving the right to sit with Christ on His throne ([Revelation 3:21](#)).

[Revelation 21:7](#) records another reward: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son." It is hard to imagine a greater reward or blessing than that!

Those whom God has called understand the importance of overcoming, but *how* do we overcome? In [Revelation 12:10-11](#), God describes in advance those who will overcome:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not [love](#) their lives to the death.

John hears "a loud voice" speaking about "our brethren" who have overcome [Satan](#), yet this encompasses more than just overcoming that spirit being. Satan is "the ruler of [this world](#)" ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)) so those who overcome him also overcome his dominion, this world. In addition, he is the source of the fiery darts hurled at our minds and all the temptations and inducements to [sin](#). When God's people are shown overcoming him, we can understand that it includes overcoming Satan's world, as well as the corrupted human nature that is influenced by him.

[Revelation 12:11](#) gives three descriptions of those who overcame Satan, providing a roadmap in our own efforts to overcome. First, they overcome Satan "by the blood of the Lamb." The most obvious meaning of the blood of Jesus is that it is the means of forgiveness for our sins. It is how we are justified and redeemed, and it is called the purchase price of the church ([Acts 20:28](#)). His blood pays the debts that we incur when we sin ([Romans 3:25](#)).

If we had to pay our own debts, we would not live long enough to overcome anything at all. The fact that our sins are taken away when we genuinely [repent](#) means that we can keep walking this road to the Kingdom without having it cut short by the death penalty ([Romans 6:23](#)).

Yet, there is more here. In verse 10, Satan is shown continually accusing Christ's brothers and sisters, acting as the perpetual plaintiff, always bringing charges of sin against the brethren. A similar scene is described in [Zechariah 3:1-4](#) (*English Standard Version*):

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."

Joshua was the high priest after Judah returned from Babylon, and here he represents the whole nation. What we need to consider, though, is that Satan probably does not have to lie one bit in his accusations! Joshua is described as wearing filthy garments, representing tremendous sin. The filth—the sin of the nation—was obvious. Satan did not have to fabricate it, yet God chose to *take away* the iniquity, rather than exacting the wages that the sin required. Likewise, in [Revelation 12:10](#), Satan's charges against God's people need not be trumped up at all. Satan is aware of the sins of God's people and is probably quite accurate in pointing out where we miss the mark.

This is where the payment for sin comes in and why it is so crucial in overcoming. Not only does God pay the debt of those with whom He is working, but the fact that He "*removes* the iniquity" (our emphasis throughout) adds another factor. [Hebrews 9:14](#) says that Christ's blood "*cleanse[s] your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God." We know what we have done, as does Satan. At times, he uses that knowledge in his "fiery darts" ([Ephesians 6:16](#)) to discourage us and to bring us down—to

get us to feel so worthless and wretched that we start thinking that we may as well give up because everything is hopeless. God could not possibly love us or accept us.

However, when we acknowledge our sins to God, repent, and ask for forgiveness, Christ's blood is applied to us and our consciences are cleansed, allowing us to continue to serve God without being weighed down (see [Hebrews 12:1](#)). We may still feel remorse, but this cleansing of the conscience means that we are not left wallowing in the mire, unable to rise due to heaviness of guilt. The shield of [faith](#) quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one, and a major part of that faith is our confidence in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Next time, we will see more of what the "blood of the Lamb" accomplishes, and why we cannot overcome without it.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Sin And Overcoming \(Part 1\): If Anyone Sins!](#)

by Martin G. Collins

We must be concerned not only with the letter of the law, but the spiritual intent as well. As we reflect back on the inadequacies or failings in our lives, we must go further than the surface symptoms, realizing that the ultimate causes generally have spiritual roots, stemming from a poor relationship with God. All of our ills are caused by an attenuated or a severed relationship with God. The heroes of the Bible achieved spiritual success because of their intimate relationships with God. Synonymous terms for sin imply a much wider spectrum of behavior than a simple letter of the law violation. Because of our blind spots, we are unable to view our spiritual condition accurately, making it difficult to detect or eradicate sin. We need to be fearful of defiling God's spiritual temple by indulging in habitual deliberate sin. As Christians, we are obligated to uphold a higher standard of morality, responsible for the letter and spirit of the law, as well as the prompts of our consciences.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[What Sin Is](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Over the last half-century, sin has gone out of vogue. In the secular public's mind, it is a religious matter and not something of much consequence. But it matters a great deal to God because it is not only the cause of all the misery in the world but also the reason humanity is so far from Him. John Ritenbaugh explains the basics of sin and what God wants us to do about it.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
