

More Than Conquerors

Octavius Winslow

Excerpt from the book "No Condemnation"

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"

– Romans 8:35, 36, 37

THE Apostle here enumerates certain things which, to the obscure eye of faith, and to the yet obscurer eye of sense, would appear to make against the best interests of the Christian, regarded either as evidences of a waning of Christ's love to him, or as calculated to produce such a result. He proposes an inquiry – the purport of which we reserve for the consideration of the closing chapter of this work – and then proceeds to give the reply. That reply sets the question entirely at rest. He argues that, so far from the things which he enumerates shaking the constancy of Christ's love, perilling the safety of the Christian, or shading the lustre of his renown, they but developed the Saviour's affection to him more strongly, confirmed the fact of his security, and entwined fresh and more verdant laurels around his brow. *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, that loved us."*

We are first invited to contemplate the Christian in the character of a 'Conqueror.' The battle we have, at some length, already considered. We have seen it to consist of a moral conflict, with inward and outward enemies, all leagued in terrible force against the soul. To this is added – what, indeed, was most peculiar to the early Church – a war of external suffering, in which penury, persecution, and martyrdom constituted the dark and essential elements. Now it will be instructive to observe in what way Christ provides for the holy warrior's passage through this fiery contest. It will be perceived that it is not by flight, but by battle; not by retreat, but by advance; not by shunning, but by facing the foe. The Captain of their salvation might have withdrawn his people from the field, and conducted them to heaven without the hazard of a conflict. But not so. He will lead them to glory, but it shall be by the path of glory. They shall carve their way to the crown by the achievements of the sword. They shall have privation, and distress, and suffering, of every kind; yet while beneath the pressure, and in the very heat of the battle, victory shall crown their arms, and a glorious triumph shall deepen the splendour of their victory. And what spiritual eye does not clearly see, that in conducting his people across the battle-field, the Lord wins to himself more renown than though he had led them to their eternal rest with entire exemption from conflict and distress?

But in what sense are we conquerors? Just in that sense in which the Holy Ghost obtains the victory. It is not the believer himself who conquers; it is the Divine Spirit within the believer. No movement is seen, no tactics are observed, no war-cry is heard, and yet there is passing within the soul a more important battle, and there is secured a more brilliant victory, than ever the pen of the historian recorded. In the first place, there is the conquest of **faith**. Where do the annals of war present such a succession of victories so brilliant, achieved by a weapon so single and simple, as is recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews? And what was the

grace that won those spiritual and glorious victories? It was the grace of **faith!** *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith"* (I John 5:4). Faith in the truth of God's word – faith in the veracity of God's character – faith in the might, and skill, and wisdom, of our Commander and Leader – faith eyeing the prize, gives the victory to the Christian combatant, and secures the glory to the Captain of his salvation. And then there is the triumph of **patience.** *"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."* *"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise"* (Heb.6:12,15). Oh, is it no real victory of the Holy Ghost in the believer, when beneath the pressure of great affliction, passing through a discipline the most painful and humiliating, the suffering Christian is enabled to cry, *"Though he slay me yet will I trust in him?"* (Job 13:15). *"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* (John 18:11). *"Not my will but thine be done!"* Suffering child of God, *"let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"* (James 1:4). And, then, there is the conquest of **joy.** *"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost"* (I Thess.1:6). *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"* (James 1:2), or trials. Why is trial an occasion of joy? Because it is the triumph of the Holy Ghost in the soul. And does not Christ say, *"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy"* (John 16:20)? And who but Jesus can turn our sorrow into joy? – not only assuaging our griefs, alleviating our sufferings, and tempering the furnace-flame, but actually making our deepest, darkest sorrows, the occasion of the deepest gladness, praise, and thanksgiving. *"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory (my tongue) may sing praise to thee, and not be silent"* (Psa.30:11,12) Oh, yes! it is a glorious victory of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, in the soul, when it can enable the believer to adopt the words of the suffering Apostle, *"I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation"* (II Cor.7:4.) Suffering reader! Jesus knows how to turn **your** sorrow into joy. Confide your grief to him, and he will cause it sweetly to sing.

"More than conquerors." The original word will admit a stronger rendering than our translators have allowed it. The same word is in another place rendered, *"a far more and exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* So that in the present instance it might be translated, **"far more exceeding conquerors."** The phrase seems to imply that it is more than a mere victory which the believer gains. A battle may be won at a great loss to the conqueror. A great leader may fall at the head of his troops. The flower of an army may be destroyed, and the best blood of a nation's pride may be shed. But the Christian conquers with no such loss. Nothing whatever essential to his well-being is perilled. His armour, riveted upon his soul by the Holy Spirit, he cannot lose. His life, hid with Christ in God, cannot be endangered. His Leader and Commander, once dead, is alive and dieth no more. Nothing valuable and precious shall he lose. There is not a grace in his soul but shall come out of the battle with sin, and Satan, and the world, purer and brighter for the conflict. The more thoroughly the Lord brings our graces into exercise, the more fully shall they be developed, and the more mightily shall they be invigorated. Not a grain of grace shall perish in the winnowing, not a particle of faith shall be consumed in the refining. Losing nothing, he gains everything! He returns from the battle laden with the spoils of a glorious victory – **"more than a conqueror."** All his resources are augmented by the result. His armour is brighter, his sword is keener, his courage is more dauntless, for the conflict. Every grace of the Spirit is matured. Faith is strengthened – love is expanded – experience is deepened – knowledge is

increased. He comes forth from the trial holier and more valorous than when he entered it. His weakness has taught him wherein his strength lieth. His necessity has made him better acquainted with Christ's fulness. His peril has shown him who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight, and whose shield covered his head in the day of battle. He is "*more than conqueror*" – he is **triumphant!**

"Through him that loved us." Here is the great secret of our victory, the source of our triumph. Behold the mystery explained, how a weak, timid believer, often starting at his own shadow, is yet "more than a conqueror" over his many and mighty foes. To Christ who loved him, who gave himself for him, who died in his stead, and lives to intercede on his behalf, the glory of the triumph is ascribed. And this is the song he chants, "*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Through the conquest which he himself obtained, through the grace which he imparts, through the strength which he inspires, through the intercession which he presents, in all our "*tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and sword*" we are "*more than conquerors.*" Accounted though we are as "*sheep for the slaughter,*" yet our Great Shepherd, Himself slain for the sheep, guides his flock, and has declared that no one shall pluck them out of his hand. We are more than conquerors through his grace who loved us in the very circumstances that threaten to overwhelm. Fear not, then, the darkest cloud, nor the proudest waves, nor the deepest wants, – in these very things you shall, through Christ, prove triumphant. Nor shrink from the battle with the "last enemy." Death received a death-wound when Christ died. You face a conquered foe. He stands at your side a crownless king, and waving a broken sceptre. Your death shall be another victory over the believer's last foe. Planting your foot of faith upon his prostrate neck, you shall spring into glory, more than a conqueror, through him that loved you. Thus passing to glory in triumph, you shall go to swell the ranks of the "noble army of martyrs" – those Christian heroes of whom it is recorded, "*THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.*"