

015: Rewards for Overcomers

(based on Ch. 14 from *The End of the Pilgrimage*)

What is an overcomer?

- An overcomer is a believer who consistently appropriates God's grace, by faith, in order to obey the Lord and serve Him in faithfulness
- NOT all believers are overcomers
- but those believers who choose to cooperate with God for victory in their lives and thereby deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him ...
- they are the overcomers
- they are not sinless, of course, but they are growing, maturing saints who are on the pathway of becoming sons to glory, the bride of Christ, inheritors in the coming kingdom who will rule with Jesus
- does that describe YOU? Are YOU an overcomer?
- remarkably, God promises numerous rewards to overcomers in the letters to the seven churches, found in Rev. 2-3
- In our last study we considered the first two rewards promised in this text:

Reward #1: Overcomers will eat of the tree of life.

- What must you overcome to receive this reward?
- The church at Ephesus had left their first love (Rev. 2:4).
- They were doctrinally solid and busy about the work of the ministry, but they had no life, no spark.
- They were characterized by dead orthodoxy.
- If you want to inherit the first reward, you must not leave your first love, or if you have left it, then return to it and never leave it again, by God's grace

Reward #2: Overcomers will receive a crown of life and not be hurt by the second death.

- What must you overcome to receive this reward?
- The reward of the crown of life is preceded by an admonition to *be ... faithful unto death*, Rev. 2:10.
- The church at Smyrna was under great persecution.
- The temptation was to lose heart and give up.
- God wants you to endure faithfully unto death despite any sufferings or persecutions.
- Don't lose heart! A crown of life awaits.

In this study we will discover five more rewards.

- Some of them are multi-faceted.
- It is important to remember these rewards are given in the letters to the seven churches in Rev. 2-3.
- These churches represent born again believers throughout the entire church age.
- In other words, the letters are like a mirror.
- As we read them we should ask God to show us how we appear spiritually to Him, and we should hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
- We should take heed, so that we can be rewarded.
- Indeed, He wants us to be rewarded, for He is glorified when we are rewarded.

Reward #3: Overcomers will eat of the hidden manna and will receive a new name on a white stone.

- **Rev. 2:17** To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.
- Manna, of course, was the nourishing food God gave to the children of Israel while they were in the wilderness.

- It was nutritious and healthy and kept them from malnourishment.
- It was loaded with all the necessary vitamins and minerals.
- Nowadays, in a spiritual sense, children of God can receive spiritual manna from the Word of God if they will choose to dine and feast regularly on the Holy Scriptures.
- So many choose not to do so and become malnourished.

We must remember that in the age to come we will also have bodies and will have, as a very minimum, the ability to eat, as Jesus did in His resurrected body.

- We may even have some NEED to eat; we don't know.
- The point is that overcomers will receive a healthy food that will have both physical and spiritual properties — genetically produced by God to have the greatest effect.
- It is called *hidden* manna — not that the food itself is hidden, but the physical health and spiritual truth and wisdom it imparts are hidden from others, I believe.
- Perhaps this heavenly food will enable us to know incredible truths that are not recorded in the Word of God.
- Maybe it will fortify us for ministering to those on Earth who were deemed unfaithful at the Judgment Seat.
- We don't know much about it, but we do know it has something to do with sustenance in the age to come — probably physical and spiritual.
- It sounds very exciting and intriguing.

Overcomers are also promised a white stone, containing a new name.

- This is rather peculiar.

- We think of Joseph, to whom the Pharaoh gave a ring and robes and a gold chain and a royal chariot and a new name and made him prime minister.
- Daniel was made *a great man* by Nebuchadnezzar and given *many great gifts* and *made ruler over the whole province of Babylon and ... over all the wise men*. He was also given a new name (Dan. 2:48).
- These men were overcomers, and they represent overcomers at the Judgment Seat.
- Jesus will give a very special gift to overcomers, not a mere trinket, but a precious white stone, undoubtedly of great value in God's eyes.
- The color represents purity and holiness.

On Earth we have things such as employee identification badges and key fobs which, when scanned, give access to certain places where others are not allowed to go.

- Perhaps the white stone is a heavenly version of that — an access device, of sorts — giving access to the city of reward and other special places in Heaven and Earth.
- Maybe it will give access to secret spiritual truths.
- What is absolutely thrilling is that it will be personalized to the faithful one, for his or her new name will be inscribed on it.
- The new name will be given by God and perhaps will sum up God's thoughts about that one's character.
- It will be a secret, not publicly known, but manifested only to that individual, implying a special closeness with Jesus.

What must you overcome to receive this reward?

- You must hate worldliness and not be a man worshiper (according to Rev. 2:14-15).
- That was the problem of the church at Pergamos.

- They had in their congregation some who held to the doctrine of Balaam, a reference to the Old Testament apostate prophet who taught the Israelites to love and intermingle with the world.
- They had others who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and one key aspect of their doctrine was elevating certain personalities.
- Doesn't that sound like the modern church of Jesus Christ?

Reward #4: Overcomers will rule over the nations and be given the morning star.

- **Rev. 2:26-28** And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels*—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.
- This is the very purpose for which we were created.
- As we learned in an earlier study, when God created Adam, He instructed the first man to have dominion over the earth.
- Adam forfeited that right to Satan when he sinned, and Satan became the prince of this world.
- Christ defeated Satan at the cross, but Jesus does not presently rule this earth.
- He will do so when He comes again and establishes His millennial kingdom.

But only His faithful ones will rule with Him, those who suffer with Him

- **Rom. 8:17** says we are joint-heirs with Jesus if we suffer with Him

- **2 Tim. 2:12** says if we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*.
- It is audacious to think Christ would allow unfaithful saints, an impure bride, to rule with Him.
- The other part of the promise is that overcomers will be given the morning star.
- The morning star is Jesus; there is no doubt about that.
- **Rev. 22:16** I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

In what sense will overcomers be given the morning star?

- We don't know for sure; it's a bit of a mystery.
- In the context of ruling, it may mean the overcomer is given the authority of Jesus to rule as if Jesus Himself were ruling.
- Some commentators suggest that Jesus as morning star is a reference to His rapturing the church in advance of the resurrections to follow.
- If that is the case, then perhaps this could be a promise that in the rapture Jesus will be much closer and personal to the faithful ones.
- Then it would be a reference to the out-resurrection, the up-calling to the city of reward for ruling that will be discussed in our next study.
- The bottom line is that we don't know, but it will be exciting!

What must you overcome to receive this reward?

- The church at Thyatira had fornicated religiously and spiritually.
- It could be they were becoming ecumenical, cooperating in ministry with unbelievers.

- God promises a reward if you will remain separated and *hold fast* to truth until Jesus returns (Rev. 2:25).
- Furthermore, you must keep Christ's works to the end, that is, continue faithful in obedience and service throughout your life, depending all the while on Christ who lives within.
- This reward is for those who allow Christ to accomplish His work through them.

Reward #5: Overcomers will be clothed in white, their names will not be blotted out of the book of life, and Jesus will confess them before the Father.

- **Rev. 3:5** He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
- Why will the overcomers be clothed in white?
- Incidentally, there is a tendency to assume that all Christians will be wearing white robes ...
- but as we discussed in a previous study, Rev. 19:8 clarifies that *the fine, white linen is the righteousnesses (plural) of the saints*.
- In other words, the qualification for receiving white robes of righteousness is not merely the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- it is the practical righteousness of those saints who are cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying process

The robes, quite literally, are a representation of each saint's behavioral righteousness.

- If you have been carnal and not faithful to the Lord in obedience, you will not receive white robes of righteousness.

- The white robes will apparently only be worn by overcomers, as we find in the above promise.
- I believe these robes are connected with glory.
- The whiteness is the idea of brightness in varying degrees, a reflection of Christ's brightness.
- Remember how Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration glowed with an intense whiteness/ brightness?
- **Matt. 17:2** He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.
- That was His glorified body that will be displayed in the heavenly New Jerusalem.
- He shares His brightness with His faithful ones in varying degrees, depending on their intensity of faithfulness.

The apostle Paul spoke about this.

- **1 Cor. 15:41** *There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.*
- **1 Cor. 15:42** *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.*
- What a magnificent concept – white robes for overcomers that glow with the brightness of Christ!
- This particular reward also includes not being blotted out of the book of life, but rather having Jesus confess your name before the Father.
- Again, this is not a promise for all Christians but for overcomers.
- But this poses a bit of a conundrum.

Aren't the names of all Christians in the book of life?

- And aren't we all eternally secure?
- The answer is "yes" to both questions.

- How, then, can the name of a believer become blotted out of the book of life?
- The Scriptures seem to use the book of life in at least three different ways, so perhaps there are three different books.
- Or perhaps there is one book of life with different chapters or sections.
- Or perhaps (using the illustration of a ledger or spreadsheet), there is one book of life containing rows and columns, with the names of people on rows and checkmarks in the appropriate columns for all the characteristics that apply.
- That may sound confusing or even outlandish to some, but perhaps it will become clearer if we piece together several passages of Scripture that indicate there are three possible books

Book #1: Records physical life (Body)

- **Psa. 139:16** Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them.
- The psalmist David recognized that he had been written in God's "book" at the point of conception.
- Thus, one of God's books records physical life.
- **Ex. 32:32-33** Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written. And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book."
- When the children of Israel sinned so grievously in making the golden calf, God was about to destroy them, but Moses interceded and asked God to spare them, blotting his name instead out of God's book, presumably the book of life.

- Some scholars believe Moses was requesting that he experience an untimely death in place of the Israelites.
- He certainly wasn't asking to go to Hell.
- That would not glorify God, nor would it make sense contextually.
- He was asking to die, so his countrymen might live.
- It seems this first book of life is focused on the body — recording life and blotting it out at death.

Book #2: Records eternal life (in the realm of one's spirit)

- **Luke 10:20** Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.
- **Phil. 3:20** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
- **Phil. 4:3** And I urge you also ... help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.
- These verses deal with the saved having their names written in the book of life, referring to the salvation of the spirit, the gift of eternal life.

But what about unbelievers?

- **Rev. 13:8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
- **Rev. 20:15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.
- Unbelievers are not written in this book of life, for it deals with spiritual life, everlasting life.

Book #3: Spiritual life (in the realm of one's soul)

- **Rev. 3:5** He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
- **Rev. 21:27** But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- **Rev. 22:19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

The verses I quoted demonstrate the possibility of a third book, which seems to be based on the soul and matters of sanctification.

- Those written in the book will be rewarded.
- Those not written in the book or who are blotted out of the book will not be rewarded.
- Jesus will not confess them before His Father in Heaven.
- Eternal life is not at stake, but all prospect of reward is forfeited.
- Perhaps instead of three books, God has one book with rows and columns, much like a ledger or spreadsheet.

Let me offer a possible scenario

- Suppose that when a person is conceived his name is added to the book of life and a check mark is placed next to his name in the column that is labeled **body**.
- When he regenerated another check mark is added to the book of life in the columns labeled **spirit** and **soul**.
- But let's say that over the course of the man's life, he lives for self — carnal and fleshly in behavior, not as a faithful servant — so that his soul does not become sanctified by the end of his life.

- Jesus blots out the check mark from the book of life that had specified spiritual life in the soul.
- The man is disinherited from ruling in the kingdom and given a negative verdict at the Judgment Seat.
- I believe that is what Rev. 3:5 is implying will happen to those who do not overcome.
- Non-overcomers do not lose salvation, for that is impossible.
- But their names are blotted off the list of those qualified to receive inheritance.
- For those who remain as firstborn sons, inheritors of the kingdom, Jesus will confess them before the Father and before the angels.
- Why the angels? Because the faithful will rule over angels (according to 1 Cor. 6:3).

What must you overcome to receive this reward? Several things are indicated in the text of Rev. 3:

- Spiritual deadness – v. 1
- Imperfect works – v. 2
- Unpreparedness to meet Christ – v. 3
- Soiled garments – v. 4
- At the time of Christ's meeting with John the apostle, only a few in the church of Sardis were worthy of reward.
- that's what Jesus says
- Would that be said of the twenty-first century church of Jesus Christ?

Reward #6: Overcomers are made pillars in God's temple and Christ's name is written on them.

- **Rev. 3:12** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down

out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

- The word *pillar* means tower and conveys the idea of strength and stability.
- Overcomers will become spiritual towers in the heavenly temple.
- **Psa. 84:10** I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- He was conveying his desire to be in the very lowliest position in the temple, as long as he could be dwelling with God and not in the tabernacles of the wicked.
- But God lovingly promises something much better to His faithful ones — not merely a place as doorkeepers, but pillars. What an honor!

Furthermore, in contradistinction to the followers of antichrist during the tribulation, who will take the mark of the beast ...

- these faithful ones will take the name of Jesus upon them and will be marked as the holy priests in the Old Testament.
- They will be given a special place in the city of reward, the heavenly city, reserved only for the faithful.
- I would encourage you to read Rev. 21-22 to get a complete description of this heavenly place of ruling, for it is magnificent.

What must you overcome to receive this reward?

- You must keep the Word of God (v. 8).
- Stand upon it, embrace it, live it, and teach it.
- Never deny Christ, even when persecuted.
- Confess Him before men.
- Stay faithful in perseverance unto the end.

- Jesus had mostly good things to say to the church of Philadelphia, and He admonished them to let no man take their crown (v. 11), implying that if they stayed on course, they would inherit rulership.
- May we all be faithful!

Reward #7: Overcomers will sit with Christ in His throne.

- **Rev. 3:21** To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
- Following His resurrection and ascension Jesus was exalted to the right hand of the Father, a place of authority and power.
- **Eph. 1:18-22** that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

One of the present positional benefits we all enjoy as believers is that we are seated with Christ in a spiritual sense on His throne in the heavenlies.

- **Eph. 2:6** (He) raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,
- Think of it! We are presently, in a spiritual sense, seated with Christ in the heavenlies, a place of great power and authority.
- Jesus wants us to claim our position of authority in Him over the enemy, by faith, in this present world.

- So few believers even realize they possess such delegated authority, much less claim it.
- Yet there is much at stake.
- Those who regularly appropriate the spiritual power of Christ's throne in this present world will be deemed overcomers and will be given the special privilege of sitting with him in a ruling sense in the world to come.
- What a high and holy privilege! I can think of no greater honor than sitting with Jesus on His throne, as His co-regent.

Notice in Rev. 3:21 Jesus says, *I also overcame.*

- Jesus was an overcomer.
- He wants to be the firstborn among MANY brethren (Rom. 8:29).
- Revel in this truth.
- This is when the angelic host of Satan will be deposed and Jesus will take rule over Heaven and Earth, along with His faithful servants.
- Do you want to sit with Him on His throne?
- If so, are you willing to pay the price?

What must you overcome to receive this reward?

- The church of Laodicea was a lukewarm, complacent church.
- They cared more for the things they could see than the things they could not see (the eternal realm).
- They were materialistic.
- Satan tries to lure us through our western culture to love the world, just like the Laodiceans.
- If you want to be an overcomer, you must not live as a lukewarm Christian (Rev. 3:15).
- Stop depending on things, the material things of this world, and start depending on Christ (v. 18).

- Open the door of your soul to Christ and let Him take control
- In **Rev. 3:20** Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.
- Oh the fellowship you can have with Jesus if you will let Him in.
- You will enjoy His presence now, and in the world to come.
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS