

PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH FOR AN OVERCOMING LIFE

#S284R

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(Proverbs 4:23) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Solomon tells us in this passage of Scripture that the natural condition of our heart will be the foundation of all blessing or, otherwise, of our entire life; and as we look through the Bible, we can see that God is far more interested in what we are, what our actual 'spiritual condition' is, than in what we do. It is often a very subtle snare of Satan (the Pastor said), for us to think we may be doing Christian work and being used of the Lord in active service, and that gives us liberty to neglect our own spiritual condition.

Often people have suffered great loss from losing sight of that point. God is more interested in our hearts being kept cleansed, pure, and filled with His Spirit, and free from all sin, than with anything we could (or might) say or do. This goes far beyond in His estimation and value, than with our Christian work. Our Christian life always comes first in God's sight.

There are three great rules of Christian life, and we should not think that we would be able to exhaust this important subject, (although these rules of God's plan are very simple). We want to consider that principle of an overcoming life'; of keeping our heart with all diligence, which will enable us to live an overcoming life, (which is the greatest thing in the sight of God).

The first rule always begins at the Cross; so, we must get under Jesus' Blood. There is no heart purity, nor pure heart condition, unless we get under that Blood. God's Word tells us how to get under the Blood; and the very moment we obey or meet the simple conditions of 'getting under the Blood', or meet the conditions of any of God's Word (or any direction exactly as God gives it), at that moment we get under the Blood and we begin to receive the benefits of that great Atonement; whether it be spiritual, physical, or otherwise. The moment we accept God's plan for victory in our home life (which Jesus' Blood has provided), that victory will become an actual fact.

Paul tells us in the 8th chapter of Romans that we are more than conquerors over every enemy, through Him Who loved us; which means, through the great work of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and through His resurrected life. This takes us back first of all to the promises, which relate to heart purity. Of course the first step is to confess and forsake all sin; this must be real and genuine, and is what is called repentance; a confession of our actual condition before God, acknowledging just what we are and where we are, without covering anything. The next step is to BELIEVE, on the authority of God's Word, that we are pardoned and cleansed according to the Scriptures alone; and we take a definite stand on the Scriptures. The moment we have confessed and forsaken our sins, we have a right to

claim pardon and cleansing, according to 1st John 1:9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Never in our Christian life can we afford to get away from that Promise, because the moment we lose sight of the promises of God, Satan will have us to walk by our experience, sight, and feelings, instead of by faith. We are to walk by faith in God's Word. Faith can only be exercised through a word spoken or written.

The second step in order to 'keep our heart with all diligence' is found in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

These are promises with which we are very familiar, and yet we need to keep them before us (every moment, as it were); "to have them at our finger tips to use against Satan." We are to continually keep them before us, so we may know in our mind and heart that we have confessed according to that promise, and that we are clean of heart; and that we have presented our bodies a living sacrifice; therefore, we are holy and acceptable unto God. This attitude brings us right up to the 6th chapter of Romans. The moment we take our place that the "old man" is nailed to the Cross of Jesus Christ; we are under the Blood and our sins are washed away; we are "dead indeed unto sin and living unto God in Christ Jesus."

People may wonder why we emphasize the 6th chapter of Romans, but it could never be emphasized too much; it would be profitable to mention those verses in every Church meeting; it would not be out of the way to carefully read, meditate, and study them once or twice every day; and be sure we are taking the position that God commands us. "Likewise reckon ye, also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom.6:11)

We can rest assured that every particle of failure we have had in not meeting our trial and temptation right, is because we fail to be definite in our stand upon this Word of God, and this story of the cleansing power of Jesus' Blood. All victories are founded on being positively clean-cut and definite in our stand of faith, and because we have confessed and forsaken our sins and surrendered our lives as a 'living sacrifice' to God, and turned our lives over to Him, that we are 'dead indeed unto sin and living unto God in Christ Jesus.'

Every moment there is the question in our mind whether we are really 'dead indeed unto sin and living unto God in Christ Jesus', and the moment that we waver and come to a halt between two opinions in our Christian life, we will fail against our temptations. As we resent injuries, and we begin to NOT meet things right, and begin to 'get out of patience and angry' when the pressure becomes greater; we will stand confused and wonder why we could not 'overcome in faith'.

The moment we get away from the power of the Cross of Christ, the foundation has come out from under our feet, and at that moment Satan can come in and defeat us; we can never stand against him except for our standing on the power of that Cross. We could trace back every failure we have had in our Christian lives, to that place where we got our eyes off of the Cross, and our mind off of those Words of

Romans 6:11. We have failed to take our stand, and to hold and maintain that position which is the first great principle of Truth in our overcoming and being victorious in our Christian life.

The moment that Satan gets us away from the Word, listening to any of his suggestions good or bad, and our faith centered on the experiences we have had, ..at that moment we will begin to have an "up and down" experience; our Christian life will begin to fail; we will not be able to meet things right; we will be overwhelmed with sorrows, troubles, and difficulties in this life.

However, the moment we have settled it that our heart is Indeed clean and pure because God's Word says so, and because the Blood has provided it; God will prepare us to stand when the battle comes; we will be able to stand and to be "more than conqueror through Him Who loved us." We must remember that the first most valuable and important 'position' to take (the foundation of all overcoming Christian living, and foundation of everything in the Christian life) is 'to keep our hearts with all diligence'.

A second principle is found in Hebrews 12th chapter, and refers to the opposite course which Christians generally take (especially in our early Christian life). It gives us advice exactly opposite to what we think we ought to do. When a person comes into the Truth and desires to live an overcoming life, they always begin to examine themselves, looking within. Their words usually are "Where are we?" "how much do we love the Lord?" Time and time again, both in letters and in personal conversations (the late Pastor said), people have said, "I do not feel that I have any love for God; I do not feel I am what I ought to be; the more I try the less I seem to receive."

Well, the cause is very apparent and on the surface; for they are looking at themselves for a ground of confidence and peace, which is directly opposite to what God commanded. God says that we are to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. First, last, and all the time, we are Look unto Jesus, instead of looking within ('within ourselves'), to see what we are, how we feel, what we seem to have, what our experience is. We are to place our eyes on God and His Son, Jesus Christ; we are to be occupied with what He is (not with what we are), but instead, what God is like and will do for us, and what Jesus Christ really is and came to do for us.

Satan well knows the value of this, and that is the reason he is always suggesting something to us so that we might be busy with ourselves, and, trying to prove to Satan that we are all right, and that we do not believe him. Then Satan says, "Just look at your experience; remember those evil thoughts you had in your mind; remember how you met that circumstance; that shows that you are not where you ought to be" (Satan will tell us). The average person will fall to those wiles of Satan, instead of taking a firmer stand upon God's Word, so they fall into a series of self-examinations, which will throttle and destroy their salvation (for the time being).

God doesn't forsake us because of our weak, faltering, unhappy, unsatisfactory condition; instead, He revealed His plan to us: which is "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." As we look unto Jesus, all desire for sinning and of heeding to the

suggestions of Satan will fade away. That is a sensible argument, just as we do that in daily human situations. If we want a supply of food, we would not go to an empty cupboard or an empty store; we would get our eyes on a well-supplied store, laden with food, etc., we would go to a well-stocked grocery store. When we go to a table for a meal, we do not sit down to an empty table; we get our eyes and expectations on a table with food.

That is what God's Word is telling us about how to get our supplies spiritually, physically and otherwise, that is, we must get our eyes on God, our source of supply; which is pure common sense. Satan's advice to us is that we must look at ourselves; (and the moment we "see the waves and hear the winds" we will go down;) we will have an "up and down" experience, and it becomes very difficult for us to see God or His Word.

However, that is just what Satan wants us to do. While we are looking at the ground, we cannot see the stars nor the moon. If we look into the sky, we will be able to discover just how things look. Satan will always say "Everything is all right; just look at yourself and see what you are like." So, while we are occupied with looking at ourselves, we have no time to look at God, or see what He is like. And, while we look at ourselves, we become filled with doubt and despair. Satan has us to look at ourselves so that he may show us that different conditions exist, and by looking at those conditions we become convinced that they really do exist. However, the Bible is filled with admonition for us to look away from ourselves toward GOD. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22).

That gives us a wonderful challenge, as God is telling us, to "get your eyes on Me; take a good look at Me and you will be saved." We would hardly think that anyone could be saved by a look: but we would be surprised what great things are accomplished via a look. God challenges us to take a look at Him, and gives us a promise of what will happen as we do look to Him and His Promises. A confidence to trust Him will be the result of our 'looking to Him'. When we get our eyes on God, our confidence grows by leaps and bounds.

God also gives us another promise along that line, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5)

In the 16th Psalm, David tells us of his remarkable experience of living an overcoming life. "I have 'set the Lord' always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Vs.8)

That is a stinging rebuke to us 'twentieth century Christians'; what a contrast to what we Christians have done. We have set our own troubles, our sorrows, trials and temptations before us (instead of, our 'always setting the Lord before us', as David said). And, we are determined to look at and meditate upon our trials. We need to realize that we lose our religion at once; and we cannot stand for a moment when we get our eyes off of God; more importantly we become an easy prey to Satan. "I have set the Lord always before me." (is what God's Word says).

When we truly consider what God is like (not what we are like), we should not try to discover how much love for God we have; nor what righteousness we have; instead, our eyes are to be on God, and try to discover what He is able and willing to make us to be and to have. Our wrong attitude about what God is like, will destroy our faith at once. In human affairs, we do not stop and try to see how much faith we have in our dealings with other people; we always consider what kind of a person they are, inquire as to their honesty and business ability, etc.; and we get all the information we can concerning their character; their power; their wisdom. So, it is just pure common sense that we should consider what God is really like, and what He can do for us as He has Promised, (if we desire to be successful in living our overcoming Christian life.)

"I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (We are told Psalm 16:8) That gives us the result of David's blessings; ("nothing was able to move him from his trust in God".)

And, David tells us in another place about keeping his eyes on the Lord "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." (Psalm 25:15). That is a remarkable statement, and it means that there is no difficulty, no entanglement that we could get our feet caught in, no desperate place nor circumstance which could surround us, (even if though we were like Jonah in the stomach of the fish); but if we get our eyes on God we will be delivered. When Jonah realized what God was really about, and what God was really like, he was inspired to say, "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." (Jonah had gotten his eyes on God, he confessed of his looking away from God, and He then could believe on what he had been shown because he had confessed of his mistake. He thought about the God Who made the Heavens and the earth; Who created that great fish which had swallowed him. A God Who made everything; and Who could and would deliver him out of the stomach of a fish that had swallowed Jonah. Then he could say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Jonah received his deliverance from that 'desperate position', that 'hard place'. It is a true fact that it makes no difference what entanglement our feet are in, what trouble or snare has overtaken us, what sorrow has overwhelmed us, we are to look at and dwell upon God. If we would keep our eyes on the trouble or circumstances (they only become worse). But, when we get our eyes on God, that entanglement will be immediately unloosed; and we will learn that 'looking at ourselves brings despair'. But a good look at God fills us with quietness and confidence; and it could not be otherwise. That is a natural law as well as a Divine one; and it works the same in Divine things as it does in human affairs. (2-Cor.3:18) "And all of us, with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness, from one degree of radiant holiness to another, even as derived from the Lord the Spirit."

As we look to God, we are changed into the same image by the Spirit of God. What does that mean? (You may look at a beautiful picture, and

as you leave the beauty of it lingers with you). You would not think that 'one look' at God could bring about such a change; and you could not tell how, or why, but your character is changed into the very character of God; (and that is made very plain when we come to understand this 'principle of God'). As we look at God and lose sight of ourselves, God's Spirit will inspire us with confidence, and bring us to the place where God will be able to work His righteousness in us (and we shall be changed via our beholding Him).

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(Lord willing, we will continue in another message on the "PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH TO ENABLE AN OVERCOMING LIFE"!

#284R SOME MAIN POINTS:

A foundation 'principle of Truth and Advice' for us to live a successful 'Overcoming Life of faith on God', is given for us to take heed to and follow, in the Bible verse written (Proverbs 4:23) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the 'issues of life.'"

We are also given another most important guideline to follow in order to keep our heart clean "with all diligence" (Rom.12:1) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a 'living sacrifice', holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (a 'service' found acceptable by God).

By our taking heed and following those guidelines from God's Word to consecrate our life to God as a living sacrifice acceptable to Him, God will enable a surrendered person to realize that they indeed can "Likewise reckon ye, also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Bible examples are used to emphasize for us, how our reading and obeying God's Word will enable Him to give us 'one good look at God', and so, to realize that His awesome power and endless love can do for us exactly what He did for those Bible characters who witnessed His almighty power to deliver in any circumstance we meet in his Name!

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The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia