



Dividing the Spoil With the Strong

Brother Emerson A. Wilson

*Isaiah 53:1 Who hath believed our report?
and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought, as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities:

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

God's Eternal Purpose

The Prophet Isaiah brought forth a report of God's Word, God's plan, and God's purpose—just exactly what God intended to do for everyone through Jesus Christ. In the midst of the confusion of our day, it is well for us to go back to the report given by God's Word. It is sad to say, but men have been led far from the truth and from the experience for which God intended us to have through His eternal purpose.

In the very beginning, God's eternal purpose was that every man and woman could be completely delivered from the guilt and power of sin and be able to reign and be an overcomer. God's purpose through Jesus Christ was that every one of us would be changed into the very image of Christ, that we would be brought to the obedience of Christ and be able to obey the Father as Jesus obeyed the Father, by the same power, by the same Spirit, and in the same way.

Isaiah said in the second verse that Christ would grow up as a tender plant, as a root out of dry ground. This tender plant springing up from dry ground is a picture of the Virgin Birth, a picture of Christ coming out of the womb where there was no human planting whatsoever. Christ sprung forth as a tender plant out of dry ground. The Prophet just meant that everything except Jesus Christ is dry ground. There is nowhere you can get any help, when it comes to real spiritual help and strength, except in Christ. How many nominal religions over the land are producing any righteousness and holiness in the lives of men and women? Friend, nothing can come forth from dry ground, and the religions of men are as dry ground.

Verse 3 tells us that He is despised and rejected of men. According to verse 2, there is no beauty in Him as man looks upon Him. In other words, when man looks at Him with carnal eyes, there is no beauty that he should desire

Him. We have seen pictures painted by artists of a beautiful young man with long, wavy hair, but that is not the true picture of Christ. The carnal eye cannot behold the beauty that is in Jesus Christ. You cannot separate Christ from the truth. He is the Word made flesh, and the same attitude that the world has toward His Word, they also have toward Jesus Christ. When it comes right down to sound teaching of God's Word, too many find no beauty in it.

You may question: "What marred Him so? What put Him in such a shape that He would be despised and rejected?"

Friend, the thing that took His beauty, the thing that made Him look much older than His age, was my sins and your sins; my grief, my sickness, my heartache, my misery, and yours too. You have seen people who have gone through miseries of their own—terrible heartache, grief, and sorrow. You might say that they became old in a few years. That is just one man's sorrow and grief. I am talking about One who bore the world's grief. Every bit of sorrow and grief that was in the world was laid on Him until He died of a broken heart while still a young man. The Scripture says: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities . . . Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him . . ." (Isaiah 53:4-10).

Someone may ask, "Are you saying that God was pleased with the unjust deeds that He permitted man to do to Jesus, when they spit in His face, slapped His face, crucified Him, ran a spear in His side, etc.?"

God was pleased because of what it was going to bring forth. He looked beyond the terrible bruises that Jesus had to take and looked to what was going to happen: many would be justified and delivered from sin. The only pleasure that Jesus found in it, according to Hebrews, Chapter 12, was that He looked to the joy that was beyond the Cross. It is a lesson to us yet today. If the devil can get us to looking at our heartache, our grief, and our sorrow, he will break us down; but remember this, beyond every heartache and sorrow that you suffer, there is going to be a blessing come out of it. There is joy beyond every heartache.

Isaiah 53:11-12 tells us: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Christ came to His glory by a great conquest. He had to conquer, He had to battle, and He had to win.

Our Great Lord

Jesus came to this world handicapped by manhood. He took on a fleshly body, and a fleshly body is a handicap. First Timothy 2:5 speaks of "the man Christ Jesus." He was handicapped by taking on a fleshly body, a body that knew what temptation was, a body that desired the things of this world, a body in which He had to battle against opposing forces. This thing of Christ redeeming us was not just a gift that God gave Him; He had to fight. He had a conquest, and He had to overcome.

Let us read Luke 11:21-22: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him [He had to overcome him], he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

I want to prove to you by the Bible that God has no real blessing for anyone but overcomers, for the strong. That eleventh chapter of Luke lets us know that He overcame the foe, the strong man, right in his own territory; He dispossessed him and divided the spoils. He banished and conquered principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh. He vanquished them, as far as the Christian is concerned, and overcame them.

Isaiah 53:12 speaks of two dividings. God said that "I will divide him [Jesus] a portion with the great," and certainly God did that. Because of Jesus' faithfulness, He is to be called great. He has been given a name that is above every name, that is named in the world, the name of Lord. He is Lord over every circumstance. He is Lord over the devil, over sin, and over the world. Because of Jesus' faithfulness, God said, ". . . I will divide him a portion with the great, and he [Jesus] shall divide the spoil with the strong . . ."

The spoil is all the belongings of the enemy that are worth anything. When someone conquers his enemy, the spoil belongs to him. He only divides the spoil with the strong because it is only the strong who are really battling.

I am not speaking against any weak Christian; I am trying to show you that you need to be strong. I will prove to you that you have no real reason to be weak. Ninety percent of the reason you are weak is because you want to be weak. Also, you are weak because you will not put forth the necessary effort to be strong. In our weakness, we cannot rightly represent Christ.

When you live a weak, borderline Christian experience, the world shakes its head and says, "Is that the best Jesus can do?" No, that is not the best He can do. He can make you strong. He not only saves you, but He also can make you strong. He only divides the spoil with the strong. This is why some people have the spoil divided with them every day, while others do not get a thing. The weak do not get a thing.

There are many Scriptures we could read where God divided a portion of the great with Him. We read in Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:1 and 6: ". . . he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand . . . Far above all

principality, and power, and might, and dominion every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come . . . and gave him to be head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. And you hath he quickened . . . And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

This heavenly place is a place where God's will is done in earth just as it is done in Heaven. This heavenly place is the kingdom where men and women live according to God's will. Right in a world where people say that nobody can please God completely, there is a heavenly place. Through the power of Jesus Christ, He delivers you from trespasses and sins. Through His power, you are able to keep His law in your heart just as it is in Heaven.

More Than Conquerors

I said in the beginning of this message that Jesus only divides the spoil with the strong. The reason we are strong is because of the conquests we overcome. You cannot overcome if you are not strong. A lot of people are afraid of that word strong. To be strong is a command, not just a good idea. We read in Ephesians 6:10-11: ". . . be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God . . ." When we fail to meet the conditions of that command, instead of overcoming, we are overcome.

In Revelation 3:21 we read, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame . . ." There is not a promise in any of the seven letters in Revelation but to the overcomers. Here is a truth that is sadly missed by many today. Going to Heaven is generally associated with weakness, instead of strength. Far too many confessions of man are of what he cannot do, instead of strong testimonies of what he can do.

Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Real Christians are supermen; they are doing what ordinary men cannot do. Revelation 14:4 says that we Christians have been redeemed from among men. We have been lifted, up to a heavenly place. Do not allow the devil to drag the church down to the level of Babylon (false religion), where there is no real victory or shouts in the camp. You cannot have real shouts without real victories, and you cannot have real victories without real battles. We often sing this song:

*Be an overcomer, only cowards yield,
When to foe they meet on the battlefield;
We are blood-bought princes of the royal host,
And must falter not, nor desert our post.*

Never yield to the enemy; God will give you strength from on high. He divides the spoil with the strong. Too many glory in their weakness. You cannot have anything to brag about if you are a weak Christian. You have to be strong to be an overcomer, and to be a Christian you have to overcome. My friend, the eternal benefits are consistently given to those who overcome, to those who conquer, and to those who are strong.

Paul said in Romans 8:37, ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." He conquered and made us more than conquerors. Through Him, He not only expects us to be conquerors, but more than conquerors. You are a conqueror when you overcome something and just make it by the skin of your teeth, but you are more than a conqueror when you can overcome it, conquer it, kick your heels together, and say, "Brother, I will lift you a little too; I have some extra strength left." In too many cases, the world is not getting any lift from the church because so many are too weak themselves. You have to be more than a conqueror in order to give the world a lift. They only get the overflow.

Christ conquered for us, and through Him we are more than conquerors. He is dividing the spoil to the strong, to those whose faith is greater than the attacks of the enemy. If you are not strong in the Lord today, you are missing some mighty great blessings and benefits that God would like for you to enjoy.

"To Him That Overcometh . . ."

Let us read in the Revelation of the promises to overcomers: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life . . ." (2:7); "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (2:11); "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna . . ." (2:17); "And he that overcometh . . . to him will I give power over the nations" (2:26); "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life . . ." (3:5); "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out . . ." (3:12); "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in, my throne . . ." (3:21). We also read in Revelation 21:7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things . . ." These all are promises, and every one of them is to overcomers.

Let us consider the promise to the church at Ephesus: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). I am sure all our minds go quickly to the Garden of

Eden and the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Revelation is written in symbolic language and takes us right back to the garden of God's favor. Before there were ever heresies among God's people, man lived in the garden of God's favor; but when man sinned, God cast him out lest he eat of the tree of life and become immortal and live forever in his sin: God does not want you living forever in your sins. This is the real reason He drove him from the garden. Had he been allowed to remain, he could have eaten of the tree of life and lived forever in his sins. Such was not the case. God cast him out of the garden; sinful man was not allowed to eat of the tree of life.

Now God speaks to the church of Ephesus, and maybe to some of us, "To him that overcometh . . ." Overcome what? The evil of the church at Ephesus was that they had left their first love. They did not lose it; they left it. They apostatized. Here is where apostasy sets in. Who is our first love? Jesus Christ. We love Him because He first loved us. He is our first love, but when we leave Him, we apostatize from Him.

How do we overcome it? He tells such to "repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). The first works were the works of love. Too many of us have fallen to the place of duty. We are not doing the first love, the first works. You will notice in every one of these seven letters, the first thing He said was, "I know thy works." It is not what we believe; it is what we are working that counts.

The promise to the overcoming Ephesians was to eat of the tree of life. You cannot eat of the tree of life and remain weak. It will put an end to the deadness, the weakness, and the coldness. Sin still separates from God. We cannot retain sin and obtain help. There is only One who can give life and give it more abundantly, and He is Jesus Christ.

Hear What the Spirit Saith

In Revelation 2:11 Jesus spoke to the church at Smyrna, saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." He taught in this chapter that we are going to be tried and tested. We, as the church, are going to go through trials, but if we will overcome through the power and grace of God, He will give us a crown of life and we will not be hurt with the second death. This lets us know that if we do not overcome, we are going to be hurt with the second death.

The first death is separation from God for a time. God told Adam and Eve that in the day they ate of that tree, they would surely die. They lived and raised a family after that, but they fell under the power of the first death, separation from God. They were driven from God's presence. Everyone in sin is under the power of the first death; you are separated from God. Jesus Christ came and paid the price to bring you back from the power of that first death, through the resurrection. Salvation brings you back to a right relationship with God. Friend, if you fail to accept Christ's salvation, and physical death comes upon you, you will be hurt of the second death, or final separation from God for time and eternity.

I still believe the second death will hurt sinners. I don't believe in annihilation. The second death is the lake of fire that burns forever and ever to torment the lost. The Bible tells us that God has made a way to escape: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape . . ." (1 Corinthians 10:13).

To the church at Pergamos Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone, a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

According to verse 13, the church at Pergamos was in a terrible trial. They were right where Satan's seat was, right where the power of Satan was operating at its greatest degree. They were living right in the midst of the headquarters of evil. Even in those conditions Jesus said, ". . . thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr ."

You know what happens today—when one Christian backslides in the church, he or she knocks out three or four others. God wants you to have an experience that if one of your brothers or sisters meets martyrdom right before your eyes, you could still stand. Thank God for corporate unity, but we will have no real Bible unity until we have a people who can stand alone for God, no matter what happens. When you bring them together, you have a force that can stand. There is too much leaning on each other; the need is to lean on Jesus.

There was every kind of doctrine imaginable floating around in Pergamos. The basis of the doctrine of Balaam was going against God and His will for a reward. Also, in that congregation was the Nicolaitans. The essence of the Nicolaitan's teaching was that since the Law was done away with, they could live as they wanted to live. We teach that Jesus fulfilled the Law and nailed it to the Cross. These people came forth with the idea that since the Law had been done away with, they were without restraint. (We have that yet today. People have their own way of thinking about things, regardless of what God's Word says.) His promise to the overcomers of Pergamos was the privilege of eating of the hidden manna. That hidden manna is that special sustenance that we gather from God's Word. As a pastor who looks right into the faces of people on Sunday, I can tell who is eating the hidden manna and who is not.

More Promises

In Revelation 2:26-28 we read the promise to the overcomers of the church at Thyatira: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star." When He said that He would give us the morning star, He was telling that He will take us right back to the illumination of the morning church.

The church at Thyatira was another congregation that needed a housecleaning. Christ appeared to them with flaming eyes and feet of brass, standing in the fire of judgment. He was stirred because that preacher was allowing Jezebel to teach Sunday school. Some people today feel that an unsaved person who has talent and a real education can be of benefit to God's people. In any case, if you bring in the unbeliever to teach, he will seduce God's people, as did Jezebel. They will not teach the Word of God, but they will teach their ideas. They will teach God's servants to commit spiritual fornication with the world and with Babylon. God's people are still a called-out, separate people. God's command is to come out and touch not, or have nothing to do with Babylon.

Thyatira allowed Jezebel, representing false teaching, to come in, and Satan began working in that congregation. Satan does not ask for a very big opening, but he comes through just a very small way, often through a teaching that leads toward the world and makes room for worldliness. Young person, do not even have a deck of cards in your hand. They were created for evil. You can call the game something else and never let any money enter into it, but when you teach people how to handle cards, there will be some who will end up as gamblers or alcoholics, deep in sin. Satan is not standing around asking us to let big things in the church, but he just wants us to allow little things that will lead us in the wrong direction.

Jesus said in verse 26, ". . . he that overcometh, and keepeth my works, to him will I give power over the nations." If we will keep His Word, keep His word, and live as He wants us to live, the power of the nations cannot affect us. I know the cry is that the day in which we are living has affected the church. I am glad we can have power over the nations. God ordained that the church sets the standard for the world. He never intended for the world to set the standard for the church.

We read in Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Sardis was actually dead while sustaining a reputation for being alive. The very name "Church of God" tells the world that you are alive, that you are a people of God.

This church at Sardis had gained a great reputation for being a flourishing church. They boasted in the purity of doctrine and the unity among the members; but when Jesus looked with those eyes of fire; He pointed out that they were not what they claimed to be. Are we really what we claim to be? As the searching eyes of God look down through the profession, are we really what we claim to be? Only if you overcome will He cause you to walk with Him in white and not blot out your name.

Let No Man Take Your Crown

To the church in Philadelphia Jesus said in Revelation 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out . . ." Here is established Christianity. If you lay hold of this experience and live for God, you will become a pillar in the church. A pillar is a support. You stand on the truth and hold up the truth. You will go no more out. Let us put a stop to that in-and-out stuff.

Philadelphia was a church with an open door, or a church with opportunity. We are reminded in verse 8 that it is Christ who opens and shuts the door. Do not ever try to go into a circumstance to work unless Christ opens the door. When He opens the door, you will not have to butt down the door. You will not have to get hold of a committee and try to get them to unlock it. You will not have to politic and get four or five preachers to speak for you. What is the lesson? Christ opens the door, and when He opens it, no man can shut it. When He shuts it, no man can open it.

The other side of the lesson is to go through the door while it is open. Why does Jesus warn us that way? Verse 11 tells us, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." When God gives you opportunity, child of God, arise and take advantage of it. The last part of verse 11 says, ". . . hold that fast . . . that no man take thy crown." How can man take your crown? There are plenty of people who lost their crowns through the fear of man. Some lose out with God because they are afraid to testify. Man, the fear of man, and the influence of man will take your crown.

God opens an individual door; He deals with individuals. Nobody else may ever see it. If you are not careful, you will go to asking people. The influence of people may keep you from going through the door when God has it open.

He also promised the overcomers of Philadelphia: ". . . I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name

of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem" New Jerusalem is made up of established Christians who are strong. She is an army with banners flying. What are those banners? Victory, going forth, conquering and to conquer. The church has conquered everything she has run into, and she is ready to conquer whatever is ahead of her. The Church of God of is not a hospital where sick, weak Christians are nursed. It is an army where strong men and women have God's name written on their foreheads and right under that, New Jerusalem.

The name denotes character. God does not write His name just on any character. The believer who remains true and is obedient will have the character, and character has to be built. Confidence has to be built. You cannot expect people who do not know you to take confidence in you. They can have faith in you, but you have to live before them and build confidence by your faithfulness, day after day. God does not give you character; you build that. He gives you the right heart, the right spirit, and the strength, but you have to build character by being faithful, day after day. God will make a pillar out of you.

Be Strong in the Lord

How do men come up with the conclusion that they can live weak lives, be overcome by every trial, and still inherit the great blessings of God? Friend, He divides the spoil with the strong. Literally deceived, thousands feel they can eat of the tree of life, although they are repeatedly overcome by trials. Even though they have succumbed to the powers of evil, they do not think they will ever be hurt of the second death. Preachers are supposedly preaching sinners into Heaven, telling them no matter how they live here, they will someday walk in white with Jesus. You will never walk in white with Jesus unless you live an overcoming life here.

Every benefit of these promises are to be enjoyed now. We walk in white with Jesus now. White is symbolic of a sinless experience. Make no mistake, there is no such thing as second-class citizenship in Heaven. You might go second class on the airplane, bus, or steamship, but there is no second class in Heaven. If you make it in, you are going to have, as Peter said, an abundant entrance (2 Peter 1:11).

Paul said in Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." If you start living according to God's might, you will look at life differently and you will live differently. We read in 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Paul instructed Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1, ". . . be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Colossians 2:10 and 15 tell us: "[Jesus] . . . is the head of all principality and power: And having spoiled principalities and powers; he made a shew of them, openly triumphing over them in it." We read in Ephesians 4:8, ". . . When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." I say again, He only divides the spoil with the strong.

Can you say that you are strong in the Lord? Friend, if you cannot, you are missing out on what a lot of other people are enjoying. God wants you to enjoy it. There is nothing wrong with admitting your weakness, if you press your claim to be strong. God is ready to give forth divine strength.

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