

The Overcoming Life - D L Moody

THE OVERCOMING LIFE

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PART I THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE

I would like to have you open your Bible at the first epistle of John, fifth chapter, fourth and fifth verses: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

When a battle is fought, all are anxious to know who are the victors. In these verses we are told who is to gain the victory in life. When I was converted I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought that old things had passed away, that all things had become new; that my old corrupt nature, the Adam life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army, that there was a battle on hand, and that if I was to get a crown, I had to work for it and fight for it.

Salvation is a gift, as free as the air we breathe. It is to be obtained, like any other gift, without money and without price: there are no other terms. "To him that worketh not, but believeth." But on the other hand, if we are to gain a crown, we must work for it. Let me quote a few verses in First Corinthians: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire: and the fire itself shall prove each man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide, which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."

We see clearly from this that we may be saved, but all our works burned up. I may have a wretched, miserable voyage through life, with no victory, and no reward at the end; saved, yet so as by fire, or as Job puts it, "with the skin of my teeth." I believe that a great many men will barely get to heaven as Lot got out of Sodom, burned out, nothing left, works and everything else destroyed.

It is like this: when a man enters the army, he is a member of the army the moment he enlists; he is just as much a member as a man who has been in the army ten or twenty years. But enlisting is one thing, and participating in a battle another. Young converts are like those just enlisted.

It is folly for any man to attempt to fight in his own strength. The world, the flesh and the devil are too much for any man. But if we are linked to Christ by faith, and He is formed in us the hope of glory, then we shall get the victory over every enemy. It is believers who are the overcomers. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Through Him we shall be more than conquerors.

I wouldn't think of talking to unconverted men about overcoming the world, for it is utterly impossible. They might as well try to cut down the American forest with their penknives. But a good many Christian people make this mistake: they think the battle is already fought and won. They have an idea that all they have to do is to put the oars down in the bottom of the boat, and the current will drift them into the ocean of God's eternal love. But we have to cross the current. We have to learn how to watch and fight, and how to overcome. The battle is only just commenced. The Christian life is a conflict and a warfare, and the quicker we find it out the better. There is not a blessing in this world that God has not linked Himself to. All the great and higher blessings God associates with Himself. When God and man work together, then it is that there is going to be victory. We are co-workers with Him. You might take a mill, and put it forty feet above a river, and there isn't capital enough in the States to make that river turn the mill; but get it down about forty feet, and away it works. We want to keep in mind that if we are going to overcome the world, we have got to work with God. It is His power that makes all the means of grace effectual.

The story is told that Frederick Douglass, the great slave orator, once said in a mournful speech when things looked dark for his race:

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"The white man is against us, governments are against us, the spirit of the times is against us. I see no hope for the colored race. I am full of sadness."

Just then a poor old colored woman rose in the audience, and said.—

"Frederick, is God dead?"

My friend, it makes a difference when you count God in.

Now many a young believer is discouraged and disheartened when he realizes this warfare. He begins to think that God has forsaken him, that Christianity is not all that it professes to be. But he should rather regard it as an encouraging sign. No sooner has a soul escaped from his snare than the great Adversary takes steps to ensnare it again. He puts forth all his power to recapture his lost prey. The fiercest attacks are made on the strongest forts, and the fiercer the battle the young believer is called on to wage, the surer evidence it is of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. God will not desert him in his time of need, any more than He deserted His people of old when they were hard pressed by their foes.

The Only Complete Victor

This brings me to the fourth verse of the fourth chapter of the same epistle: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." The only man that ever conquered this world—was complete victor—was Jesus Christ. When He shouted on the cross, "It is finished!" it was the shout of a conqueror. He had overcome every enemy. He had met sin and death. He had met every foe that you and I have got to meet, and had come off victor. Now if I have got the spirit of Christ, if I have got that same life in me, then it is that I have got a power that is greater than any power in the world, and with that same power I overcome the world.

Notice that everything human in this world fails. Every man, the moment he takes his eye off God, has failed. Every man has been a failure at some period of his life. Abraham failed. Moses failed. Elijah failed. Take the men that have become so famous and that were so mighty—the moment they got their eye off God, they were weak like other men; and it is a very singular thing that those men failed on the strongest point in their character. I suppose it was because they were not on the watch. Abraham was noted for his faith, and he failed right there—he denied his wife. Moses was noted for his meekness and humility, and he failed right there—he got angry. God kept him out of the promised land because he lost his temper. I know he was called "the servant of God," and that he was a mighty man, and had power with God, but humanly speaking, he failed, and was kept out of the promised land. Elijah was noted for his power in prayer and for his courage, yet he became a coward. He was the boldest man of his day, and stood before Ahab, and the royal court, and all the prophets of Baal; yet when he heard that Jezebel had threatened his life, he ran away to the desert, and under a juniper tree prayed that he might die. Peter was noted for his boldness, and a little maid scared him nearly out of his wits. As soon as she spoke to him, he began to tremble, and he swore that he didn't know Christ. I have often said to myself that I'd like to have been there on the day of Pentecost alongside of that maid when she saw Peter preaching.

"Why," I suppose she said, "what has come over that man? He was afraid of me only a few weeks ago, and now he stands up before all Jerusalem and charges these very Jews with the murder of Jesus."

The moment he got his eye off the Master he failed; and every man, I don't care who he is—even the strongest—every man that hasn't Christ in him, is a failure. John, the beloved disciple, was noted for his meekness; and yet we hear of him wanting to call fire down from heaven on a little town because it had refused the common hospitalities.

Triumphs of Faith

Now, how are we to get the victory over all our enemies? Turn to Galatians, second chapter, verse twenty: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." We live by faith. We get this life by faith, and become linked to Immanuel—"God with us." If I have God for me, I am going to overcome. How do we gain this mighty power? By faith.

The next passage I want to call your attention to is Romans, chapter eleven, verse twenty: "Because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith." The Jews were cut off on account of their unbelief: we were grafted in on account of our belief. So notice: We live by faith, and we stand by faith

Next: We walk by faith. Second Corinthians, chapter five, verse seven: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." The most faulty Christians I know are those who want to walk by sight. They want to see the end—how a thing is going to come out. That isn't walking by faith at all—that is walking by sight.

I think the characters that best represent this difference are Joseph and Jacob. Jacob was a man who walked with God by sight. You remember his vow at Bethel:—"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and

raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God." And you remember how his heart revived when he saw the wagons Joseph sent him from Egypt. He sought after signs. He never could have gone through the temptations and trials that his son Joseph did. Joseph represents a higher type of Christian. He could walk in the dark. He could survive thirteen years of misfortune, in spite of his dreams, and then ascribe it all to the goodness and providence of God.

Lot and Abraham are a good illustration Lot turned away from Abraham and tented on the plains of Sodom. He got a good stretch of pasture land, but he had bad neighbors. He was a weak character and he should have kept with Abraham in order to get strong. A good many men are just like that. As long as their mothers are living, or they are bolstered up by some godly person, they get along very well; but they can't stand alone. Lot walked by sight; but Abraham walked by faith; he went out in the footsteps of God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And again: We fight by faith. Ephesians, sixth chapter, verse sixteen: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Every dart Satan can fire at us we can quench by faith. By faith we can overcome the Evil One. To fear is to have more faith in your antagonist than in Christ.

Some of the older people can remember when our war broke out. Secretary Seward, who was Lincoln's Secretary of State—a long-headed and shrewd politician—prophesied that the war would be over in ninety days; and young men in thousands and hundreds of thousands came forward and volunteered to go down to Dixie and whip the South. They thought they would be back in ninety days; but the war lasted four years, and cost about half a million of lives. What was the matter? Why, the South was a good deal stronger than the North supposed. Its strength was underestimated.

Jesus Christ makes no mistake of that kind. When He enlists a man in His service, He shows him the dark side; He lets him know that he must live a life of self denial. If a man is not willing to go to heaven by the way of Calvary, he cannot go at all. Many men want a religion in which there is no cross, but they cannot enter heaven that way. If we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. So let us sit down and count the cost. Do not think that you will have no battles if you follow the Nazarene, because many battles are before you. Yet if I had ten thousand lives, Jesus Christ should have every one of them. Men do not object to a battle if they are confident that they will have victory, and, thank God, every one of us may have the victory if we will.

The reason why so many Christians fail all through life is just this—they underestimate the strength of the enemy. My dear friend, you and I have got a terrible enemy to contend with. Don't let Satan deceive you. Unless you are spiritually dead, it means warfare. Nearly everything around tends to draw us away from God. We do not step clear out of Egypt on to the throne of God. There is the wilderness journey, and there are enemies in the land.

Don't let any man or woman think all he or she has to do is to join the church. That will not save you. The question is, are you overcoming the world, or is the world overcoming you? Are you more patient than you were five years ago? Are you more amiable? If you are not, the world is overcoming you, even if you are a church member. That epistle that Paul wrote to Titus says that we are to be sound in patience, faith and charity. We have got Christians, a good many of them, that are good in spots, but mighty poor in other spots. Just a little bit of them seems to be saved, you know. They are not rounded out in their characters. It is just because they haven't been taught that they have a terrible foe to overcome.

If I wanted to find out whether a man was a Christian, I wouldn't go to his minister. I would go and ask his wife. I tell you, we want more home piety just now. If a man doesn't treat his wife right, I don't want to hear him talk about Christianity. What is the use of his talking about salvation for the next life, if he has no salvation for this? We want a Christianity that goes into our homes and every-day lives. Some men's religion just repels me. They put on a whining voice and a sort of a religious tone, and talk so sanctimoniously on Sunday that you would think they were wonderful saints. But on Monday they are quite different. They put their religion away with their clothes, and you don't see any more of it until the next Sunday. You laugh, but let us look out that we don't belong to that class. My friend, we have got to have a higher type of Christianity, or the Church is gone. It is wrong for a man or woman to profess what they don't possess. If you are not overcoming temptations, the world is overcoming you. Just get on your knees and ask God to help you. My dear friends, let us go to God and ask Him to search us. Let us ask Him to wake us up, and let us not think that just because we are church members we are all right. We are all wrong if we are not getting victory over sin.

PART II INTERNAL FOES

Now if we are going to overcome, we must begin inside. God always begins there. An enemy inside the fort is far more dangerous than one outside.

Scripture teaches, that in every believer there are two natures warring against each other. Paul says; in his epistle to the Romans: —“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” Again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he says:—“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

When we are born of God, we get His nature, but He does not immediately take away all the old nature. Each species of animal and bird is true to its nature. You can tell the nature of the dove or canary-bird. The horse is true to his nature, the cow is true to hers. But a man has two natures, and do not let the world or Satan make you think that the old nature is extinct, because it is not. “Reckon ye yourselves dead”; but if you were dead, you wouldn’t need to reckon yourselves dead, would, you? The dead self would be dropped out of the reckoning. “I keep my body under”; if it were dead, Paul wouldn’t have needed to keep it under. I am judicially dead, but the old nature is alive, and therefore if I don’t keep my body under and crucify the flesh with its affections, this lower nature will gain the advantage, and I shall be in bondage. Many men live all their lives in bondage to the old nature, when they might have liberty if they would only live this overcoming life. The old Adam never dies. It remains corrupt. “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

A gentleman in India once got a tiger-cub, and tamed it so that it became a pet. One day when it had grown up, it tasted blood, and the old tiger-nature flashed out, and it had to be killed. So with the old nature in the believer. It never dies, though it is subdued: and unless he is watchful and prayerful, it will gain the upper hand, and rush him into sin. Someone has pointed out that “I” is the centre of S-I-N. It is the medium through which Satan acts.

And so the worst enemy you have to overcome, after all, is yourself. When Capt. T—— became converted in London, he was a great society man. After he had been a Christian some months, he was asked:

“What have you found to be your greatest enemy since you began to be a Christian?”

After a few minutes of deep thought he said, ‘Well, I think it is myself.’

“Ah!” said the lady, “the King has taken you into His presence, for it is only in His presence that we are taught these truths.”

I have had more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man who has crossed my path. If I can only keep him right, I don’t have any trouble with other people. A good many have trouble with servants. Did you ever think that the trouble lies with you instead of the servants? If one member of the family is constantly snapping, he will have the whole family snapping. It is true whether you believe it or not. You speak quickly and snappishly to people and they will do the same to you.

Appetite

Now take appetite. That is an enemy inside. How many young men are ruined by the appetite for strong drink! Many a young man has grown up to be a curse to his father and mother, instead of a blessing. Not long ago the body of a young suicide was discovered in one of our large cities. In his pocket was found a paper on which he had written: “I have done this myself. Don’t tell anyone. It is all through drink.” An intimation of these facts in the public press drew two hundred and forty-six letters from two hundred and forty-six families, each of whom had a prodigal son who, it was feared, might be the suicide.

Strong drink is an enemy, both to body and soul. It is reported that Sir Andrew Clarke, the celebrated London physician, once made the following statement: “Now let me say that I am speaking solemnly and carefully when I tell you that I am considerably within the mark in saying that within the rounds of my hospital wards to-day, seven out of every ten that lie there in their beds owe their ill health to alcohol. I do not say that seventy in every hundred are drunkards; I do not know that one of them is; but they use alcohol. So soon as a man begins to take one drop, then the desire begotten in him becomes a part of his nature, and that nature, formed by his acts, inflicts curses inexpressible when handed down to the generations that are to follow him as part and parcel of their being. When I think of this I am disposed to give up my profession—to give up everything—and to go forth upon a holy crusade to preach to all men, ‘Beware of this enemy of the race!’ ”

It is the most destructive agency in the world to-day. It kills more than the bloodiest wars. It is the fruitful parent of crime and idleness and poverty and disease. It spoils a man for this world, and damns him for the next. The Word of God has declared it: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... nor drunkards ... shall inherit the Kingdom of God.”

How can we overcome this enemy? Bitter experience proves that man is not powerful enough in his own strength. The only cure for the accursed appetite is regeneration—a new life—the power of the risen Christ within us. Let a man that is given to strong drink look to God for help, and He will give him victory over his appetite. Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and He will take away that appetite if you will let Him.

Temper

Then there is temper. I wouldn't give much for a man that hasn't temper. Steel isn't good for anything if it hasn't got temper. But when temper gets the mastery over me I am its slave, and it is a source of weakness. It may be made a great power for good all through my life, and help me; or it may become my greatest enemy from within, and rob me of power. The current in some rivers is so strong as to make them useless for navigation.

Someone has said that a preacher will never miss the people when he speaks of temper. It is astonishing how little mastery even professing Christians have over it. A friend of mine in England was out visiting, and while sitting in the parlor, heard an awful noise in the hall. He asked what it meant, and was told that it was only the doctor throwing his boots downstairs because they were not properly blacked. "Many Christians," said an old divine, "who bore the loss of a child or of all their property with the most heroic Christian fortitude, are entirely vanquished by the breaking of a dish or the blunders of a servant."

I have had people say to me, "Mr. Moody, how can I get control of my temper?"

If you really want to get control, I will tell you how, but you won't like the medicine. Treat it as a sin and confess it. People look upon it as a sort of a misfortune, and one lady told me she inherited it from her father and mother. Supposing she did. That is no excuse for her.

When you get angry again and speak unkindly to a person, and when you realize it, go and ask that person to forgive you. You won't get mad with that person for the next twenty-four hours. You might do it in about forty-eight hours, but go the second time, and after you have done it about half-a-dozen times, you will get out of the business, because it makes the old flesh burn.

A lady said to me once, "I have got so in the habit of exaggerating that my friends accuse me of exaggerating so that they don't understand me."

She said, "Can you help me? What can I do to overcome it?"

"Well," I said, "the next time you catch yourself lying, go right to that party and say you have lied, and tell him you are sorry. Say it is a lie; stamp it out, root and branch; that is what you want to do."

"Oh," she said, "I wouldn't like to call it lying." But that is what it was.

Christianity isn't worth a snap of your finger if it doesn't straighten out your character. I have got tired of all mere gush and sentiment. If people can't tell when you are telling the truth, there is something radically wrong, and you had better straighten it out right away. Now, are you ready to do it? Bring yourself to it whether you want to or not. Do you find someone who has been offended by something you have done? Go right to them and tell them you are sorry. You say you are not to blame. Never mind, go right to them, and tell them you are sorry. I have had to do it a good many times. An impulsive man like myself has to do it often, but I sleep all the sweeter at night when I get things straightened out. Confession never fails to bring a blessing. I have sometimes had to get off the platform and go down and ask a man's forgiveness before I could go on preaching. A Christian man ought to be a gentleman every time; but if he is not, and he finds he has wounded or hurt someone, he ought to go and straighten it out at once. You know there are a great many people who want just Christianity enough to make them respectable. They don't think about this overcoming life that gets the victory all the time. They have their blue days and their cross days, and the children say,

"Mother is cross to-day, and you will have to be very careful."

We don't want any of these touchy blue days; these ups and downs. If we are overcoming, that is the effect our life is going to have on others, they will have confidence in our Christianity. The reason that many a man has no power, is that there is some cursed sin covered up. There will not be a drop of dew until that sin is brought to light. Get right inside. Then we can go out like giants and conquer the world if everything is right within.

Paul says that we are to be sound in faith, in patience, and in love. If a man is unsound in his faith, the clergy take the ecclesiastical sword and cut him off at once. But he may be ever so unsound in charity, in patience, and nothing is said about that. We must be sound in faith, in love, and in patience if we are to be true to God.

How delightful it is to meet a man who can control his temper! It is said of Wilberforce that a friend once found him in the greatest agitation, looking for a dispatch he had mislaid, for which one of the royal family was waiting. Just then, as if to make it still more trying, a disturbance was heard in the nursery.

"Now," thought the friend, "surely his temper will give way."

The thought had hardly passed through his mind when Wilberforce turned to him and said:

"What a blessing it is to hear those dear children! Only think what a relief, among other hurries, to hear their voices and know they are well."

Covetousness

Take the sin of covetousness. There is more said in the Bible against it than against drunkenness. I must get it out of me—destroy it, root and branch—and not let it have dominion over me. We think that a man who gets drunk is a horrid monster, but a covetous man will often be received into the church, and put into office, who is as vile and black in the sight of God as any drunkard.

The most dangerous thing about this sin is that it is not generally regarded as very heinous. Of course we all have a contempt for misers, but all covetous men are not misers. Another thing to be noted about it is that it fastens upon the old rather than upon the young.

Let us see what the Bible says about covetousness:—

"Mortify therefore your members ... covetousness, which is idolatry."

"No covetous man hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of God."

"They that will be (that is, desire to be) rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

"The wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."

Covetousness enticed Lot into Sodom. It caused the destruction of Achan and all his house. It was the iniquity of Balaam. It was the sin of Samuel's sons. It left Gehazi a leper. It sent the rich young ruler away sorrowful. It led Judas to sell his Master and Lord. It brought about the death of Ananias and Sapphira. It was the blot in the character of Felix. What victims it has had in all ages!

Do you say: "How am I going to check covetousness?"

Well,—I don't think there is any difficulty about that. If you find yourself getting very covetous—very miserly—wanting to get everything you can into your possession—just begin to scatter. Just say to covetousness that you will strangle it, and rid it out of your disposition.

A wealthy farmer in New York state, who had been a noted miser, a very selfish man, was converted. Soon after his conversion a poor man came to him one day to ask for help. He had been burned out, and had no provisions. This young convert thought he would be liberal and give him a ham from his smoke house. He started toward the smoke-house, and on the way the tempter said,

"Give him the smallest one you have."

He struggled all the way as to whether he would give a large or a small one. In order to overcome his selfishness, he took down the biggest ham and gave it to the man.

The tempter said, "You are a fool."

But he replied, "If you don't keep still, I will give him every ham I have in the smoke-house."

If you find that you are selfish, give something. Determine to overcome that spirit of selfishness, and to keep your body under, no matter what it may cost.

Mr. Durant told me he was engaged by Goodyear to defend the rubber patent, and he was to have half of the money that came from the patent, if he succeeded. One day he woke up to find that he was a rich man, and he said that the greatest struggle of his life then took place as to whether he would let money be his master, or he be master of money, whether he would be its slave, or make it a slave to him. At last he got the victory, and that is how Wellesley College was built.

Are You Jealous, Envious?

Go and do a good turn for that person of whom you are jealous. That is the way to cure jealousy; it will kill it. Jealousy is a devil, it is a horrid monster. The poets imagined that Envy dwelt in a dark cave, being pale and thin, looking asquint, never rejoicing except in

the misfortune of others, and hurting himself continually.

There is a fable of an eagle which could outfly another, and the other didn't like it. The latter saw a sportsman one day, and said to him,

"I wish you would bring down that eagle."

The sportsman replied that he would if he only had some feathers to put into the arrow. So the eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but didn't quite reach the rival eagle; it was flying too high. The envious eagle pulled out more feathers, and kept pulling them out until he lost so many that he couldn't fly, and then the sportsman turned around and killed him. My friend, if you are jealous, the only man you can hurt is yourself.

There were two business men—merchants—and there was great rivalry between them, a great deal of bitter feeling. One of them was converted. He went to his minister and said,

"I am still jealous of that man, and I do not know how to overcome it."

"Well," he said, "if a man comes into your store to buy goods, and you cannot supply him, just send him over to your neighbor."

He said he wouldn't like to do that.

"Well," the minister said, "you do it and you will kill jealousy."

He said he would, and when a customer came into his store for goods which he did not have, he would tell him to go across the street to his neighbor's. By and by the other began to send his customers over to this man's store, and the breach was healed.

Pride

Then there is pride. This is another of those sins which the Bible so strongly condemns, but which the world hardly reckons as a sin at all. "An high look and a proud heart is sin." "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Christ included pride among those evil things which, proceeding out of the heart of a man, defile him.

People have an idea that it is just the wealthy who are proud. But go down on some of the back streets, and you will find that some of the very poorest are as proud as the richest. It is the heart, you know. People that haven't any money are just as proud as those that have. We have got to crush it out. It is an enemy. You needn't be proud of your face, for there is not one but that after ten days in the grave the worms would be eating your body. There is nothing to be proud of—is there? Let us ask God to deliver us from pride.

You can't fold your arms and say, "Lord, take it out of me"; but just go and work with Him.

Mortify your pride by cultivating humility. "Put on, therefore," says Paul, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, ... humbleness of mind." "Be clothed with humility," says Peter. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

PART III EXTERNAL FOES

What are our enemies without? What does James say? "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." And John? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Now, people want to know what is the world. When you talk with them they say:

"Well, when you say 'the world,' what do you mean?"

Here we have the answer in the next verse: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

"The world" does not mean nature around us. God nowhere tells us that the material world is an enemy to be overcome. On the contrary, we read: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork."

It means "human life and society as far as alienated from God, through being centered on material aims and objects, and thus

opposed to God's Spirit and kingdom." Christ said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you ... the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Love of the world means the forgetfulness of the eternal future by reason of love for passing things.

How can the world be overcome? Not by education, not by experience; only by faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Worldly Habits and Fashions

For one thing we must fight worldly habits and fashions. We must often go against the customs of the world. I have great respect for a man who can stand up for what he believes is right against all the world. He who can stand alone is a hero.

Suppose it is the custom for young men to do certain things you wouldn't like your mother to know of—things that your mother taught you are wrong. You may have to stand up alone among all your companions.

They will say: "You can't get away from your mother, eh? Tied to your mother's apron-strings!"

But just you say: "Yes! I have some respect for my mother. She taught me what is right, and she is the best friend I have. I believe that is wrong, and I am going to stand for the right." If you have to stand alone, stand. Enoch did it, and Joseph, and Elisha, and Paul. God has kept such men in all ages.

Someone says: "I move in society where they have wine parties. I know it is rather a dangerous thing because my son is apt to follow me. But I can stop just where I want to; perhaps my son hasn't got the same power as I have, and he may go over the dam. But it is the custom in the society where I move."

Once I got into a place where I had to get up and leave. I was invited into a home, and they had a late supper, and there were seven kinds of liquor on the table. I am ashamed to say they were Christian people. A deacon urged a young lady to drink until her face flushed. I rose from the table and went out; I felt that it was no place for me. They considered me very rude. That was going against custom; that was entering a protest against such an infernal thing. Let us go against custom, when it leads astray.

I was told in a southern college, some years ago, that no man was considered a first-class gentleman who did not drink. Of course it is not so now.

Pleasure

Another enemy is worldly pleasure. A great many people are just drowned in pleasure. They have no time for any meditation at all. Many a man has been lost to society, and lost to his family, by giving himself up to the god of pleasure. God wants His children to be happy, but in a way that will help and not hinder them.

A lady came to me once and said: "Mr. Moody, I wish you would tell me how I can become a Christian." The tears were rolling down her cheeks, and she was in a very favorable mood; "but," she said, "I don't want to be one of your kind."

"Well," I asked, "have I got any peculiar kind? What is the matter with my Christianity?"

"Well," she said, "my father was a doctor, and had a large practice, and he used to get so tired that he used to take us to the theater. There was a large family of girls, and we had tickets for the theaters three or four times a week. I suppose we were there a good deal oftener than we were in church. I am married to a lawyer, and he has a large practice. He gets so tired that he takes us out to the theater," and she said, "I am far better acquainted with the theater and theater people than with the church and church people, and I don't want to give up the theater."

"Well," I said, "did you ever hear me say anything about theaters? There have been reporters here every day for all the different papers, and they are giving my sermons verbatim in one paper. Have you ever seen anything in the sermons against the theaters?"

She said, "No."

"Well," I said, "I have seen you in the audience every afternoon for several weeks and have you heard me say anything against theaters?"

No, she hadn't.

"Well," I said, "what made you bring them up?"

"Why, I supposed you didn't believe in theaters."

"What made you think that?"

"Why," she said, "Do you ever go?"

"No."

"Why don't you go?"

"Because I have got something better. I would sooner go out into the street and eat dirt than do some of the things I used to do before I became a Christian."

"Why!" she said, "I don't understand."

"Never mind," I said. "When Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence, you will understand it all. He didn't come down here and say we shouldn't go here and we shouldn't go there, and lay down a lot of rules; but He laid down great principles. Now, He says if you love Him you will take delight in pleasing Him." And I began to preach Christ to her. The tears started again. She said:

"I tell you, Mr. Moody, that sermon on the indwelling Christ yesterday afternoon just broke my heart. I admire Him, and I want to be a Christian, but I don't want to give up the theaters."

I said, "Please don't mention them again. I don't want to talk about theaters. I want to talk to you about Christ." So I took my Bible, and I read to her about Christ.

But she said again, "Mr. Moody, can I go to the theater if I become a Christian?"

"Yes," I said, "you can go to the theater just as much as you like if you are a real, true Christian, and can go with His blessing."

"Well," she said, "I am glad you are not so narrow-minded as some."

She felt quite relieved to think that she could go to the theaters and be a Christian. But I said,

"If you can go to the theater for the glory of God, keep on going; only be sure that you go for the glory of God. If you are a Christian you will be glad to do whatever will please Him."

I really think she became a Christian that day. The burden had gone, there was joy; but just as she was leaving me at the door, she said,

"I am not going to give up the theater."

In a few days she came back to me and said, "Mr. Moody, I understand all about that theater business now. I went the other night. There was a large party at our house, and my husband wanted us to go, and we went; but when the curtain lifted, everything looked so different. I said to my husband, 'This is no place for me; this is horrible. I am not going to stay here, I am going home.' He said, 'Don't make a fool of yourself. Everyone has heard that you have been converted in the Moody meetings, and if you go out, it will be all through fashionable society. I beg of you don't make a fool of yourself by getting up and going out.' But I said, 'I have been making a fool of myself all of my life.' "

Now, the theater hadn't changed, but she had got something better and she was going to overcome the world. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." When Christ has the first place in your heart you are going to get victory. Just do whatever you know will please Him. The great objection I have to these things is that they get the mastery, and become a hindrance to spiritual growth.

Business

It may be that we have got to overcome in business. Perhaps it is business morning, noon and night, and Sundays, too. When a man will drive like Jehu all the week and like a snail on Sunday, isn't there something wrong with him? Now, business is legitimate; and a man is not, I think, a good citizen that will not go out and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; and he ought to be a good business man, and whatever he does, do thoroughly. At the same time, if he lays his whole heart on his business, and makes a god of it, and thinks more of it than anything else, then the world has come in. It may be very legitimate in its place—like fire, which, in its place, is one of the best friends of man; out of place, is one of the worst enemies of man;—like water, which we cannot live without; and yet, when not in place, it becomes an enemy.

So my friends, that is the question for you and me to settle. Now look at yourself. Are you getting the victory? Are you growing more even in your disposition? are you getting mastery over the world and the flesh?

And bear this in mind: Every temptation you overcome makes you stronger to overcome others, while every temptation that defeats you makes you weaker. You can become weaker and weaker, or you can become stronger and stronger. Sin takes the pith out of your sinews, but virtue makes you stronger. How many men have been overcome by some little thing! Turn a moment to the Song of

Solomon, the second chapter, fifteenth verse: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." A great many people seem to think these little things—getting out of patience, using little deceits, telling white lies (as they call them), and when somebody calls on you sending word by the servant you are not at home—all these are little things. Sometimes you can brace yourself up against a great temptation; and almost before you know it you fall before some little thing. A great many men are overcome by a little persecution.

Persecution

Do you know, I don't think we have enough persecution now-a-days. Some people say we have persecution that is just as hard to bear as in the Dark Ages. Anyway, I think it would be a good thing if we had a little of the old-fashioned kind just now. It would bring out the strongest characters, and make us all healthier. I have heard men get up in prayer-meeting, and say they were going to make a few remarks, and then keep on till you would think they were going to talk all week. If we had a little persecution, people of that kind wouldn't talk so much. Spurgeon used to say some Christians would make good martyrs; they would burn well, they are so dry. If there were a few stakes for burning Christians, I think it would take all the piety out of some men. I admit they haven't got much; but then if they are not willing to suffer a little persecution for Christ, they are not fit to be His disciples. We are told: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Make up your mind to this: If the world has nothing to say against you, Jesus Christ will have nothing to say for you.

The most glorious triumphs of the Church have been won in times of persecution. The early church was persecuted for about three hundred years after the crucifixion, and they were years of growth and progress. But then, as Saint Augustine has said, the cross passed from the scene of public executions to the diadem of the Cæsars, and the down grade movement began. When the Church has joined hands with the State, it has invariably retrograded in spirituality and effectiveness; but the opposition of the State has only served to purify it of all dross. It was persecution that gave Scotland to Presbyterianism. It was persecution that gave this country to civil and religious freedom.

How are we to overcome in time of persecution? Hear the words of Christ: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Paul could testify that though persecuted, he was never forsaken; that the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him, and delivered him out of all his persecutions and afflictions.

A great many shrink from the Christian life because they will be sneered at. And then, sometimes when persecution won't bring a man down, flattery will. Foolish persons often come up to a man after he has preached and flatter him. Sometimes ladies do that. Perhaps they will say to some worker in the church: "You talk a great deal better than so and so"; and he becomes proud, and begins to strut around as if he was the most important person in the town. I tell you, we have a wily devil to contend with. If he can't overcome you with opposition, he will try flattery or ambition; and if that doesn't serve his purpose, perhaps there will come some affliction or disappointment, and he will overcome in that way. But remember that anyone that has got Christ to help him can overcome every foe, and overcome them singly or collectively. Let them come. If we have got Christ within us, we will overthrow them all. Remember what Christ is able to do. In all the ages men have stood in greater temptations than you and I will ever have to meet.

Now, there is one more thing on this line: I have either got to overcome the world, or the world is going to overcome me. I have either got to conquer sin in me—or sin about me—and get it under my feet, or it is going to conquer me. A good many people are satisfied with one or two victories, and think that is all. I tell you, my dear friends, we have got to do something more than that. It is a battle all the time. We have this to encourage us: we are assured of victory at the end. We are promised a glorious triumph.

Eight "Overcomes."

Let me give you the eight "overcomes" of Revelation.

The first is: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life." He shall have a right to the tree of life. When Adam fell, he lost that right. God turned him out of Eden lest he should eat of the tree of life and live as he was forever. Perhaps He just took that tree and transplanted it to the Garden above; and through the second Adam we are to have the right to eat of it.

Second: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Death has no terrors for him, it cannot touch him. Why? Because Christ tasted death for every man. Hence he is on resurrection ground. Death may take this body, but that is all. This is only the house I live in. We need have no fear of death if we overcome.

Third: "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." If I overcome God will feed me with bread that the world knows nothing about, and give me a new name.

Fourth: "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." Think of it! What a thing to have; power over the nations! A man that is able to rule himself is the man that God can trust with power. Only a man who can

govern himself is fit to govern other men. I have an idea that we are down here in training, that God is just polishing us for some higher service. I don't know where the kingdoms are, but if we are to be kings and priests we must have kingdoms to reign over.

Fifth: "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." He shall present us to the Father in white garments, with outspot or wrinkle. Every fault and stain shall be taken out, and we be made perfect. He that overcomes will not be a stranger in heaven.

Sixth: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God; and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name." Think of it! No more backsliding, no more wanderings over the dark mountains of sin, but forever with the King, and He says, "I will write upon him the name of My God." He is going to put His name upon us. Isn't it grand? Isn't it worth fighting for? It is said when Mahomet came in sight of Damascus and found that they had all left the city, he said: "If they won't fight for this city what will they fight for?" If men won't fight here for all this reward, what will they fight for?

Seventh: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." My heart has often melted as I have looked at that. The Lord of Glory coming down and saying: "I will grant to you to sit on My throne, even as I sit on My Father's throne, if you will just overcome." Isn't it worth a struggle? How many will fight for a crown that is going to fade away! Yet we are to be placed above the angels, above the archangels, above the seraphim, above the cherubim, away up, upon the throne with Himself, and there we shall be forever with Him. May God put strength into every one of us to fight the battle of life, so that we may sit with Him on His throne. When Frederick of Germany was dying, his own son would not have been allowed to sit with him on the throne, nor to have let anyone else sit there with him. Yet we are told that we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and that we are to sit with Him in glory!

And now, the last I like best of all: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." My dear friends, isn't that a high calling? I used to have my Sabbath-school children sing—"I want to be an angel": but I have not done so for years. We shall be above angels: we shall be sons of God. Just see what a kingdom we shall come into: we shall inherit all things! Do you ask me how much I am worth? I don't know. The Rothschilds cannot compute their wealth. They don't know how many millions they own. That is my condition—I haven't the slightest idea how much I am worth. God has no poor children. If we overcome we shall inherit all things.

Oh, my dear friends, what an inheritance! Let us then get the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Master.