

THE HIDDEN MANNA, THE WHITE STONE AND THE NEW NAME

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"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

I do not know a more solemn or weighty part of the Word of God than the messages, which our gracious Lord sent by the hand of John to the seven churches in Asia, which we find contained in chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. As introductory to these messages, and to give them greater weight and power, as well as to furnish a general introduction to the whole of the book, our adorable Lord appeared to John in a very conspicuous and glorious revelation, of which we have the record in the **Re 1** first chapter. He tells us there that he "was in the isle of Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Being, thus, the Lord's prisoner, he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

I need not, however, enter at any length into a description or explanation of the glorious vision with which John was thus specially favoured, and shall, therefore, only draw your attention to the following points in it.

1. If you carefully examine the distinctive features of this revelation, you will not see in it His **priestly** character. He did not appear to John as the High Priest over the house of

God; as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father; as the Intercessor able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. But He appeared as King in Zion in all the dignity of regal majesty. You will easily see this from casting your eye upon the description, which John gives of this glorious Person. Thus, he says that "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." This feature symbolises His eternity; for you will recollect that "the Ancient of Days," who from the context is evidently the Father, is represented in **Da 7:9** with "the hair of His head like the pure wool." But why should this symbolise eternal duration? It is because grey hair represents age in man; and thus in type and figure His hairs being white like wool, as white as snow, represent duration, that is, eternal duration in the Son of God. He is called, in Isaiah **Isa 9:6** "the everlasting Father," or as Bishop Lowth renders it, "the Father of the everlasting age;" and His "goings forth" are declared by the prophet Micah to have been "from of old, from everlasting." Now, it is to Him in His regal character that this description applies. The prophet Isaiah, therefore, says in connection with His being "the everlasting Father," that He is "the Prince of Peace;" and that "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end;" and the prophet Micah, in the passage which I have quoted, declares that He is "ruler in Israel."

2. Another feature observable in this description is, that "**His eyes were as a flame of fire,**" not tender, gracious and sympathising, as would have been the eyes of the high priest; but the eyes of a King in His regal majesty, flashing forth rays and beams to illuminate and gladden those who believe, and to smite down, as with so many lightning shafts, those who live and die in their unbelief; searching all hearts and trying all reins, and like flames of fire penetrating into the depths of every human breast.

3. Another striking feature in this description is that "**His feet were like unto fine brass**"—not torn or bearing any marks upon them of the cruel nails whereby He was fastened to the cross, but bright, shining and glorious as become the feet of an enthroned King, able to dispense the riches of His grace, and yet swift to move forward on errands of vengeance.

4. Another noticeable feature was His **voice**, which was "**as the sound of many waters;**" so full was it, melodious, powerful and falling upon the ear like water rushing from a height. You have sat at times, it may be, near a waterfall, and you have heard the rush of the waters as they fell down the steep rock. What strength, and yet what harmonious melody, were blended together in the sound. What a calm stole over your mind, and how, as you breathed the air around you, so cool and fresh, a spirit of meditation came over you as your ears listened to the noise of the ever falling waters in their ceaseless melody! Thus, in it there were combined these three things: power, continuance and melody. And are not these three things characteristic of the voice of Christ as "the voice of the Lord upon many waters" spoken of by the Psalmist?

1. It is **powerful;** for "with the word of a king there is power;" and it is expressly said of it, "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

2. It is **continuous,** for this voice is ever speaking to the hearts of His people.

3. And we need not tell those who have heard it that it is most melodious, for every accent is full of sweetness; as the

Bride said in her description of her Beloved, "His mouth is most sweet." **So 5:16**

4. Another characteristic feature of this glorious Person is that He "had in His **right hand seven stars.**" These He himself explains as being the angels, that is, the presiding ministers or pastors of the seven churches. They are called "stars" as shining in the Christian firmament with conspicuous lustre, as giving light to the churches, directing them to Christ, and pointing out the way of salvation, as stars were used for guides in ancient navigation, and also to rule the churches, as stars rule the night. As held also in Christ's hand, it shows how that they are wholly at His disposal, held up only by His mighty power, preserved from error and apostasy only by His grace, and used as instruments to do His work and shine in His light.

5. Another conspicuous feature, which I may name, is **His sword.** "**And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.**" This signifies the Word which He speaks with a divine power, for it corresponds with the description given of the Word of God by the apostle, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." **Heb 4:12** By this sword He searches the heart, as He says: "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts" **Re 2:23** and by this sword he fights also against all evil doers, as He declares, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of My mouth." **Re 2:16** This sword carries with it death when it is lifted up against the impenitent and unbelieving: "And I will kill her children with death." **Re 2:23**

6. The last feature which I shall mention is the glory of His countenance. **"And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."** This is a representation of His glory as the Sun of righteousness; and as such He appeared to the three favoured disciples when He was transfigured before them, for "His face did shine as the sun." **Mt 17:2**

Now this wonderful description of the glory of the Son of God, as seen by John, was to prepare him for the reception of the Revelation with which he was to be favoured for the benefit of the church in all time, and especially to give weight, authority and power to the messages sent by him to the seven churches.

But I need not dwell further upon these points. We have a part of one of these messages to consider this morning, and I hope that the Lord may enable me so to open it up, that I may bring out of it something that may be for your instruction, or edification, or encouragement, or admonition and reproof, if need be, as He may enable me, in handling it rightly, to divide the Word of truth.

In these messages to the seven churches, there are certain features, which are common to all, and there are certain features, which are distinctive of each.

Of the features common to all the messages, there are chiefly three.

1. The first is, **"I know thy works."** How accordant these words are with the description of His eyes as a flame of fire; and how they show us that every word and work, every thought and imagination of our hearts are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive Him. He knows all

that we are and have been, and is perfectly acquainted with everything in us both in nature and grace. It is good when a feeling sense of this makes us watch our words and works, and to desire that they might be pleasing in His sight, and that what we do in His name might have His approbation in our hearts and consciences.

2. Another common feature, and one that generally winds up the message (**as, "I know thy works," introduces it**), is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." These words extend the message beyond the church to which they were spoken, and address themselves to every one to whom the Word comes, and to whom an ear is given to hear and receive it. Thus each message sent to the churches becomes a message sent personally to us. If we have a spiritually circumcised ear, if we are willing to listen to the voice of the Lord, He speaks to us in every message as personally and as distinctly as He spoke to each individual church. It is indeed an unspeakable blessing to have this ear given to us that we may receive in humility, simplicity and godly sincerity what the Lord speaks in the Word of his grace. It is by His Word that He knocks at the door of our hearts; and what a blessing He has pronounced on the man who hears His voice and opens the door when he hears the knock, like a fond and affectionate wife when she hears the knock of her husband at the door of his house: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." **Re 3:20**

3. The last common feature which I shall name, is the promise given **"to him that overcometh,"** varied in every message with a special promise attached to it.

But, as the consideration of this feature will form a main part of our subject this morning, I shall not now dwell upon it, but come at once to the words of our text; which I shall take up, simply, in the order in which it lies before me.

I.—First, I shall call your attention to the solemn invitation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

II.—Secondly, endeavour to show the character pointed out, who is said in it to overcome, and in what way he that overcomes obtains the victory.

III.—Thirdly, I shall dwell upon those special promises which are given to him that overcometh, which are:

- 1. He shall eat of the hidden manna;**
2. There shall be given him **a white stone;**
3. And in the stone **a new name** written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

I.—I have already dropped a few remarks upon the invitation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" but I shall now endeavour to handle it at greater length, and to dwell more fully upon the mind and meaning of the Lord in it.

And first let me urge this point upon you, that in and by this invitation you are called upon to listen this morning to what the Lord may condescend to speak by me to your hearts and consciences. I know well that I cannot bring before you anything worth listening to except the Lord enable; but as coming up to the house of God to hear His Word, as sitting

before me in this assembling of yourselves together for the worship of God, you are engaged by so coming, and by the profession so made are bound as a matter of conscience to listen to what you hear brought forward in the name of God; not to allow your mind to be diverted by any vain speculation or idle fancy that Satan may thrust in, nor waste precious moments upon matters which may be attended to at other seasons, but, with God's help, to avail yourself of that short space which we have in the week to meet together in the Lord's house to listen to that which, through His goodness and mercy, may be for the good of your soul.

You come here to be instructed in the truth of God; to have your sins shown to you in the light of His countenance, that you may repent of and forsake them; to have the way of salvation through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus set before you, and thus have faith raised up in your hearts to believe in His name; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." You are come to hear the work of God upon the soul traced out, and the living experience of God's saints described, that you may have some testimony that the work is begun and is being carried on in your own soul. And you are come also to learn how you may know the will of God and do it, by hearing the precepts of the gospel set before you, that you "may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Now will you throw away, so to speak, all these blessings and advantages for a few silly thoughts, vain speculations, or anxious cares, and will you not rather, if your heart be right with God, earnestly desire and pray that you may get some blessing this morning from the Word which you are come to hear?

I may divide hearers of the gospel into three classes.

1. Those who hear the Word of life sounding in their ears, and that, it may be, continually, who yet feel no concern whatever in what they hear; into whose outward ear the Word may penetrate, and who may perhaps even learn something of its meaning in their natural judgment, and yet their ear is not circumcised, or conscience touched, or heart wrought upon and engaged to listen to the Word as being the Word of life. These will always form a very numerous part in every religious assembly. In many congregations there are no other hearers, for they are what the Word of God calls "the congregation of the dead." But even in our assemblies under the Word of truth, where we hope there are many who truly fear God, there will always be a large proportion of these unconcerned hearers who are brought under the sound of the Word from various causes but at present have no manifested interest in it.

2. But there is another class of hearers who seem at first sight of a much more promising character, and of whom it is very difficult to pronounce how far they possess the life of God or not. They certainly are different from the class, which I have just described, for they have more light, and there is something in them, which often looks like life. Wherever the gospel is preached there will be many, and doubtless I have some such now before me, who will never listen to anything but pure truth, and whose ear is usually very keen to detect any deviation from it—perhaps more so than many of those who know truth in its power. And yet, though their ears have been in some measure opened to distinguish sounds, yet it is at present a doubtful point how far the truth of God has really laid vital hold of their heart, struck deep root into their soul, or been made spirit and life to their consciences. The event sometimes shows that some of these doubtful characters do possess the beginnings of divine life. Where this is the case, it will in due time be clearly manifested.

In every congregation there will be many such; and it is for you who desire to be right before God, and yet see in what a doubtful spot your soul often seems to stand for eternity, not to rest satisfied with the mere dim and doubtful hope of being found right at last. You have light enough to see the danger of standing on a spot where you have little or no testimony of your interest in Christ, or any clear evidence that there is a saving work of grace on your heart. It will be then your wisdom and mercy to look narrowly into your own bosom, carefully examine your own heart, and see whether you are one who has ears to hear by the application of God's Word to your soul, and what you have felt of the power of truth upon your conscience, or whether you have not advanced at present beyond merely knowing the distinction of sounds, and understanding what you hear in your natural judgment.

I am well convinced in my own mind that no man has an ear **(that is, a spiritual ear)** to listen to and receive God's Word except God has given him faith; and I am also well satisfied that no man has faith who has not felt the power of the Word of God upon his heart. You will perhaps recollect that last Lord's day, in explaining how faith was raised up in the heart, I ascribed it to the power of the Word under the operation and influence of the Spirit. Now those who have felt the power of the Word in the hand of the Spirit, penetrating even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, so as to be a discerners of the thoughts and intentions of the heart—these have ears to hear; they listen as for eternity; they weigh up what is spoken as a matter of personal concern. "Am I right? Am I deceived? What faith I profess to have, is it God's gift and God's work? Does it spring from nature or from grace? Is it of the operation of God, or is it merely the natural faith of my own mind with which God has nothing to do?" These

searchings of heart are good: they manifest, as far as they go, a tender conscience, and where they lead to prayer, cries and sighs before the throne, and to a real baring of the breast before Him whose eyes are as flames of fire; where there is this prostration of body and soul and spirit before His heart-searching eye, and that continued—because we cannot tell how far nature may go, how far conscience may work, and what a man may feel just for a few moments under solemn impressions—but where this is continued, not as a mere land-spring, but flowing on as a river, and goes on day after day, and sometimes hour after hour, until the question is settled between God and conscience, there you have marks and evidences of the life of God; and to such a one the Lord speaks in the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

3. Now this is the third character of whom I spoke as being found among the hearers of the gospel. These have the life of God in their souls; in these the Lord the Spirit has wrought a principle of living faith. They may much differ from each other in their personal experience. Some may be strong and others weak; some highly favoured with the manifestations of the love of God, and others walking in much darkness, or even doubt and fear, through trials and temptations; but they all possess the light of life, the fear of God, a spirit of faith and prayer, and a separation in heart and spirit from the world. Now these are they to whom our Lord speaks as having an ear, and He bids them hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. For the Spirit says very important things to the churches in the messages sent to them. He shows them the evil and the good; and state into which sin had brought some of them, and what the consequences would be if, as churches, they persevered in disobedience. He also sets before those who were believing and obedient very precious

promises, and these are especially made to him amongst them who overcometh.

II.—I shall now, therefore, coming to our second point, endeavour to show who this **character** is who is said **to overcome**, for that is the point which peculiarly concerns us. It is, indeed, the most important part of the message, for if you will read carefully the messages which the Spirit sends to the churches, you will find in every one of them a promise given to him that overcometh, and to no other.

I. It is, therefore, a point which demands our earnest and anxious enquiry; for bear this in mind, that the Christian contest is not one in which one man may win the prize and the others be unsuccessful, yet not be disgraced nor dishonoured. It is not like a competition in a public school, where two or three boys carry off the various prizes, whilst others fail, and yet no disgrace is attached to the failure. It is not like a race where one runs and receives the prize, and those who miss the prize still are as they were before the race was run by them. This contest is for life or death: it is either being overcome and being damned, or overcoming and being saved. It is like two men, mortal foes, who are fighting at the sword's point for their life: "You must die," says the one combatant to the other, "or I must die; no quarter on either side shall be given; my sword must either pierce your breast, or your sword must pierce mine; we shall never leave the ground till one of us be dead." That is the sort of contest spoken of by the Spirit to the churches: a contest of certain victory or certain defeat, and that for all eternity. Or I may compare it to a man who is tried for his life at the bar of justice: it is for him a verdict of guilty or not guilty; it is to send him free into the light of day, or to send him to swing upon the gallows.

Bear this also in mind, that this solemn truth affects every one here. It is not as if you might calmly and indifferently say, "So-and-so is religious and I am not, but what of that? I make no profession; my father or my mother, my husband or my wife is very religious; I highly esteem them for it, and should be glad to be like them; but I hope it will not be so bad with me as you make out. God is very merciful, and there may be after all no such great difference between us in the end. Besides which, I hope I may be religious some time before I die; and you well know that I can't change my own heart or do anything of myself." But this is the way whereby Satan deceives men to their own destruction. We do not find in the Word of God any such hopes as these held out. If we have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, we shall find there is no promise except to him that overcometh; and, therefore, to be overcome is to perish, as to overcome is to be saved. Hear, then, for yourselves what the Spirit saith to the churches, and see whether you are one who overcometh, or one who is overcome.

I shall endeavour to point out, in various ways, how we overcome, and as I travel along the road, do you endeavour to travel by my side, and see how far you and I can square accounts, and how matters stand between God and conscience, as I shall unfold the dealings of the Lord with it.

1. The first thing, which we have to overcome—for it meets us at the very beginning of our race—is **self**. If that be overcome, all is overcome; if **that be** not overcome, nothing is overcome. Our Lord, therefore, on one occasion, when He saw great multitudes following Him, turned and said unto them, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." **Lu 14:26,27** He also said, on another occasion, "If any man will

come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." **Lu 9:23,24** Thus, according to our Lord's testimony, to deny self lay at the very head of the way. The man who could not do that, could not take a single step in the way of eternal life.

Now just consider for a moment, the state and condition in which the grace of God finds us, if indeed it be that it has reached our hearts. **Buried in self**, assuming, indeed, different forms in different individuals, yet the same state and condition in all. It may have found you **profane** self; it may have found another **professing** self; it may have found in **this man** self buried in, yet working strongly by and with the most daring and open iniquities, and in **that man** covering itself over with a robe of self-righteousness. But wherever it found you, or whatever it found you, your first step in the strait and narrow way was to overcome it. Now here we begin to learn for the first time our weakness; for to learn our weakness is a very great lesson in the divine life. It is only as we learn our weakness that we learn in whom our strength is, and how we are to overcome self, not by our own wisdom, will, or power, but by His who teacheth our hands to war and fingers to fight. If once we sit down and contemplate what lies before us in all the difficulties of the way, which we are called to tread, we shall never take a single step.

Many a person under conviction has said, inwardly or outwardly, "If I were in some different station of life; if I were not so peculiarly circumstanced as I am with my business, with my wife, with my family, with my connections, I could take the step; but I cannot, I am so hampered." And there the man would lie till he dropped into hell, had he no help or strength but what he found in himself. But the Spirit

of God comes to his rescue, if one of His, does that for him, and that most effectively, what the man never could do for himself had he a thousand years to do it in. By the application of God's words to his conscience, He pulls him out of self in which he was hopelessly buried, and causes him to take that step which he could not take, and yet knew must be taken or he must die in his sins.

He now comes willingly and easily out of his profanity, or out of his profession, or out of his self-righteousness, because there is a power put forth in his conscience by the Spirit of God, which gives him the victory in the first stage of the spiritual life—a victory over self. And he finds it easy too, most unexpectedly easy, for by the power of the Word in his heart, every crooked thing is made straight, and every rough place plain, and the worm Jacob can thresh the mountains. As long as he was shut up in unbelief—with desires to be right and yet held down by worldly influence—nothing was done; the step was too hard to take. But when the Spirit of God came with power, with light and life into his soul, he was able in a moment to do what otherwise he never could have done, and he found to his surprise that he did it easily. There was no difficulty in coming out of profanity, in leaving ungodly companions, in dropping the oath, or the drink, or the nightly resort. He was drawn out of his profane self, and all that accompanied it, by a secret yet invincible power, and what at one time seemed to be a mountain, he found diminished to a mole hill. The chains, which bound him to sin and the world dropped off his hands, like those of Peter in the prison. He began to hate himself for his sins, and to hate all that which held him down fast in them, and longed to be free from all his besetments that he might not ever be a vile, beastly wretch, carried away by his lusts and passions. To deny them, he felt, was sweeter than to gratify them.

Or it might be you were deeply wrapped up in professing self, and you often said to yourself, "I can never leave the church or chapel which I now attend. What will my wife say, what will my husband say, what will members of the church say if I leave the church where I was baptized? Besides which, it would crush all my prospects in life; it would turn against me my best friends, and be almost my ruin. O it is a sacrifice which I cannot make, for it would mar all my respectability, destroy all my comfort and worldly happiness, and overthrow all I have been striving to build up for years. It cannot be done."

But keen and sharp convictions are sent to pierce and wound the conscience. The fearful danger of falling, as an unpardoned sinner, into the hands of Him, who is a consuming fire, terrifies the mind; the wrath of God alarms the conscience; death and hell stand continually before the soul, and it feels compelled to flee from the wrath to come, be the sacrifice what it may. In these exercises the Word of truth becomes often opened up to the enlightened understanding, and a power is put forth, in its application to the heart, to believe and act upon it. Now is done in a moment that work whereby without difficulty the step is taken, self is denied and the soul delivered from the snare.

2. But to pass on to our next step. We do not travel very far in this way, before we begin to find the power of **belief**. When the Lord is pleased to work in us by His Spirit and grace, in His first dealings with our conscience, as I have just described, and gives us faith to take the onward step, of which I have just spoken, so as to come out of the world and be separated from it, and from all that profanity or profession in which we were wrapped up, we could do it, for we did it in His strength, not our own. Anything was better than to die in

our sins. A prison, a workhouse, the loss of all our substance was preferable to the loss of our soul. This was faith—the faith of Moses, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But at this time we did not, for the most part, know the mighty power of unbelief, for it lay deeply hidden out of sight in our heart. We had sufficient faith given unto us to take the first step in denying self, and to come out of its binding strength and power; but we little knew the strength of unbelief for all future trials and cares. It was, indeed, subdued for the time, but soon began to revive and show itself in renewed strength. Nor did we, at first, know much of the mighty power of sin in which unbelief finds its stronghold.

But when the law, in its spirituality and curse, made itself known to the awakened heart, when guilt began to press upon the conscience, light to open, in its penetrating discoveries, the majesty, holiness and purity of God, as seen therein, attended, as it always is, with a sense of our own helplessness to fulfil any of His commandments, and the bondage produced thereby, then it was that the power of unbelief was felt. It became now a heavy load, and the soul often cried aloud—

O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be.

But we could not overcome this unbelief. The stumbling stone was too heavy for us to take up, and though we would believe, and often tried to believe, and muster up every argument and every reason why we should not doubt, yet we found that we could not overcome this unbelief; for if it seemed to be for a time subdued or removed, it came back again with renewed strength and power. Now, if we were left to ourselves, in this unbelief we should live and die. But the

Lord comes to the soul's aid, applies His Word, brings home some promise or some blessed truth out of the Scripture, and by this means raises up and draws forth faith upon His dear Son. Now the unbelief is overcome, and we find it as easy to believe when the Lord gives faith as it was hard, yea, impossible to believe, when shut up in our feelings in unbelief.

3. But we may have—and this is the third thing which we have to grapple with—much **guilt of conscience**, especially when the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and we have to learn that painful lesson which all learn, sooner or later—the depth of the fall. There is often great guilt of conscience, bondage of spirit and much despondency accompanying the breaking up of this deep fountain. Now how are we to overcome our guilt? How can we, when we are burdened with a sense of dreadful sin and iniquity, lift up our head before God in sweet confidence and holy boldness? We cannot do it, for the guilt of our sins has such an accusing voice that we cannot bear the voice of mercy speaking in the promises and invitations of the gospel. There is nothing harder to bear than a guilty conscience, for it seems to cut the very roots of our hope.

Now none but He who has laid the burden on can take it off. He must remove it from the conscience, for we cannot. But sooner or later He speaks peace to the troubled mind, and when He is pleased to apply the precious blood of Christ to the conscience, or to drop in a comforting word, or to give a view of the glorious Person of the Son of God, and manifest Him with a divine power to the heart as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, then the guilt is removed and the conscience is cleansed and purged, by the application of atoning blood, from filth, guilt and dead works to serve the living God. In this way the guilt of sin is overcome, and with

it its filth, love, practice and power, for all these are removed by the same hand, which takes away its guilt.

4. But as we travel on we begin to find the **worm** to have a very strong hold upon our heart—much stronger than we suspected. Now there are many things connected with the world which have to be overcome, such as the spirit of it, the strong affection which we naturally have to it, the cares which spring out of our connection with it, and the continual circumstances which necessarily attend the various employments which each of us has to fill. John tells us the way in which the world is overcome: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." **1Jo 5:4** And he asks this question as if he would show that there was only one character who succeeded in obtaining this victory: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" **1Jo 5:5**

Now, unless there were some great difficulty in overcoming the world, would John have used this strong and striking language concerning it? But why does faith give this victory? Because it worketh by love, being connected with the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is only by faith that there is a saving view of the glory and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and where this is seen and felt, the love of the world drops out of the heart, and its carking cares and anxieties no longer press as before. Compared with the beauty and blessedness of the Son of God, the world and all its charms are seen to be less than nothing and vanity; and as the Lord Jesus reigns and rules in the heart, He puts the world and worldly things under His feet.

5. But in order to be an overcomer, we must overcome every obstacle, which stands in our way. Among these obstacles we

may find **many fears**, and amongst them especially **fears of death**. Many anxious thoughts and terrifying suggestions may press upon our minds; how it may be with us in those solemn moments when we shall have to encounter the swellings of Jordan. Now these fears we have to overcome, that we may die in sweet peace; and it may be that they will not be fully overcome till just before the Lord cuts the thread of life. But how graciously is it said of the Lord, that one object for which he came was that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage!" Death is the last enemy; but the blessed Lord, who has overcome every other enemy, will also overcome this last in the experience of His dear people, and enable them to say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

II. If you recollect, I said I would endeavour to show you in **what way** he that overcomes obtains the victory. Let me now redeem my pledge. I have already shown how victory is given us over self, unbelief, the guilt of sin, the world and the fear of death; but I have not yet distinctly explained the difference between those who fight and are overcome, and those who fight and gain the victory.

Very many persons think themselves overcomers, who never gain any real victory but, as Paul says, "beat the air." He tells us, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." **2Ti 2:5** Thus a man may strive for, and seem to get victory, and yet if he do not strive lawfully, that is, to use a common expression, fight or run according to the laws of the game, his success goes for nothing. This at once disposes of the whole tribe of those who fight with carnal weapons and gain the victory by their own skill and strength. Their victory is in fact a defeat; for it

is merely substituting one form of the flesh for another. Thus, a man may be considered a very religious man, and yet not possess a grain of true religion; a very holy man, and yet not be sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost; indeed, may be a very consistent, upright and benevolent man, full of devotedness to what are called good works, and yet know nothing of the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in his own heart. The great point is not only that we overcome, but overcome in such a way as is consistent with the Word of truth and meets with the approbation of God and His testimony in our own conscience.

Now we must not think to take the city by storm, to win the great battle by our own strength, wisdom and righteousness, but to learn that lesson which is contained in the words which were spoken by the Lord to the heart of Paul when he was groaning under the thorn in the flesh, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." **2Co 12:9** The great secret of overcoming is, to be overcome, and then when overcome, to fall down at the feet of Him who is able to make us more than conquerors and, in and by His strength, to take up the sword against our foes and fears. No man ever overcame by his own strength. It must be with us as it was with Israel of old, "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them." **Ps 44:3** It is not our own sword that can fight our battle, nor our own arm that can save us; but it must be the right hand and arm of God, and especially the light of His countenance shining into our souls to put our foes and fears to flight, and that because He has a personal favour unto us.

We read in the Book of Revelation of a blessed company who overcame Satan the accuser of the brethren, and we are told

how they overcame him. It was by the blood of the lamb, and the Word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. **Re 12:11** These were their weapons: atoning blood sprinkled upon their conscience, the testimony of God's Word in their heart, and their martyr spirit, so that they would sooner die than yield.

But a point which deeply tries many of God's living family is the being continually overcome and finding so much in them that is their master. They seem so little able to make head against the workings of sin, the movements of pride and covetousness, the secret lusts ever striving for the mastery, their own worldly spirit and the guilt, doubt and fear which a sense of the strength of these evils produces. They find sin continually working in them, and to their shame and sorrow it seems as if the sin, which they hate would prove their master, for they feel they have no strength to overcome it.

But now observe, what is the effect of this experience of their own weakness. It is to bring them down, to lay them low, to empty and strip them of all their strength, wisdom and righteousness. Now when they are brought there, to fall down in all humility of mind, with much brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart, before Him who sits upon the throne, and to beg of Him to undertake their cause which they cannot manage themselves, and give them the victory over sin and self, He will appear for them.

When, then, in His tender mercy and surpassing grace, the Lord thus listens to their humble cry, and sends His Word with power into their soul, it gives them the victory, and enables them to overcome. Their worst foes, their greatest fears are all dispelled, and they find themselves able to overcome what they were never able to get the better of, when they tried in their own strength. It will be found in the

end that all who tried to overcome in their own strength were defeated; but that those who, stripped of their own strength, looked to the Lord for strength, proved the victors. All who fight with earthly weapons have them beaten out of their hands, for all carnal weapons are unfit for this terrible struggle.

The apostle, therefore, says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." **2Co 10:4** What does Satan, the accuser of the brethren, care for arms manufactured by the skill and wisdom of man? What are resolutions, tears, prayers, vows and the whole apparatus of creature contrivances before this terrible accuser of the brethren, an angry God, a condemning law, a guilty conscience and an unbelieving, infidel heart, ever fighting and resisting the Word of God? What is all the strength of the creature or the holiness of the flesh against the allurements of sin, the power of temptation, the spirit of the world and the enmity of our own heart against the God of heaven? Nature can no more be bound by these bonds than Samson by the green withs or the new ropes. Sin would break them off from our arms like a thread. No man ever gained the victory over self, or overcame sin, who depended upon himself or trusted to his own strength. But when, after repeated and aggravated failures, almost in an agony of despair, he falls down before God, overcome, beaten and defeated, and with longing eyes looks to Him who sits upon the throne, and begs of Him to undertake his cause, then that victory which was impossible to nature now becomes possible to grace, and that which he could never have done for himself, the Lord does for him in the twinkling of an eye.

III.—But now I pass on to consider the special promises which are given in our text to him that overcometh. These are three:

1. It shall be given to him **"to eat of the hidden manna."**
2. To receive **"a white stone."**
3. In the stone **"a new name**, which no man knoweth save him that receiveth it."

But perhaps when you look, with a searching eye, through the greater part of your experience, you find yourself so overcome, baffled and disappointed, that the very mention of the promises to him that overcometh sinks you lower, as feeling you have no interest in them. How often are you obliged to confess before the Lord that on this and that occasion your bad temper, or your worldly-mindedness, or your light and trifling spirit, or the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life overcame you! Have you not been entangled, again and again, with a spirit of covetousness, or fretfulness and rebellion, or a careless indifference and neglect of prayer, reading and meditation? Even looking back through the past week, and taking an account of victories and defeats, how many more have been your defeats than your victories; how much oftener you have cried and sighed than sung and rejoiced; how much more often you have had reason to put your mouth in the dust, if so be there might be hope, than lift up your face with holy confidence and been able to shout victory through the blood of the Lamb!

Yet let me endeavour, if I can, to show you in spite of this, that all with you is not defeat, and that you do sometimes, with all your defeats, know what it is to overcome.

1. Look, then, at the first promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Is that promise altogether hidden from your eyes? By the hidden manna we

may understand two things: first, the Lord Himself; and secondly, the Word of His grace.

It represents the Lord himself, as we find Him speaking in John vi., in answer to the Jews, who said that their fathers did eat manna in the wilderness: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." **Joh 6:32,33**

There were various things in the manna that fell in the wilderness, which made it a suitable emblem of the Lord Jesus. Its coming from heaven was highly typical of the Son of God coming from heaven to earth; its fall only with the dew was emblematical of the dew of the Spirit which always attends the manifestations of Christ; its being just sufficient, so that he who had much had nothing over, and he who had little had no lack, was typical of the sufficiency of Christ for the desires and wants of all; and its being gathered day after day, was emblematical of Christ being the daily food of His people. Now have you not tasted sometimes of this manna, and felt a sweetness and blessedness in Christ, which you could never describe? And has not this been when views of Him by faith have enabled you to overcome? Then you fed upon Christ, and this was hidden manna to your soul.

But it also signifies not only Christ in His Person, love, blood and grace, but the Word of truth that testifies of Him; for we can only know and feed upon Christ by the testimony given of Him in the Word. Thus, any portion of the Scripture that is opened to the mind, and applied to the heart, so that the soul is fed thereby, is a part of this hidden manna. Now, this is only given to those that overcome. God's Word is precious only when you can overcome that unbelief which shut your heart against it; that guilt which could not receive the

promises, but sealed your heart as with a double seal against them; that bondage of spirit, which kept you from the sweet liberty of truth.

If you look at your experience, you will find when you are in darkness, in bondage, in guilt, in fear, under the hiding and withdrawing of God's presence, the Word of God is mostly out of sight. You may try to catch hold of a promise, plead an invitation, endeavour to look through the dark cloud; but being under the power of unbelief, you cannot lay hold of God's truth so as to bring it into your soul and taste its sweetness and power. But if you get a little victory over your unbelief, the bright side of God's face begins to shine upon you, and you can see the Mediator looking upon you with affection and love. Then comes the sweetness of God's Word, for it is sweet just in proportion to your faith.

So you see that in order to feed upon the manna, you must overcome, because the feast is only to the victor. It was when Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, that Melchisedec brought forth the bread and wine. So it is in grace. How often God's Word is to you a sealed book; how often you hear from the pulpit the most encouraging preaching, yet get no encouragement from it; how often you hear Christ held forth in His Person, blood and righteousness, and go away as you came, without any sensible relief! What is the reason? Because you are overcome. Unbelief, bondage, darkness of mind, insensibility rest upon your spirit, and all these keep you from feeding upon the manna. But sometimes a gracious Word comes over all these hills and mountains of unbelief, bondage, doubt and fear, and as this Word drops into your heart, you begin to shout victory over all your foes and fears. Then the Word of God begins to open itself up in its sweetness and blessedness. The Lord of the

house brings out the hidden manna, and the Word of God is made sweet and precious to the soul.

Sometimes you read the Word of God as a dry and barren task to satisfy conscience. When is that? When you are shut up in unbelief and bondage. But at other times the Word of God is read with pleasure, and it is to you the joy and rejoicing of your heart. This is when you can believe it; and thus faith turns the Word of God into manna. But if you are barren, then the Word of God is barren; if dead, the Word is dead; if cold and lifeless, the Word is so too. But when the scene changes, when the clouds are dispersed, then you see light in God's light. Then it is a blessed Bible, a precious book, full of sweet promises and encouraging invitations. It is in this way the manna is given to the over-comer.

2. "And **will give him a white stone.**" This seems to allude to an ancient practice, whereby criminals were either condemned or acquitted, according as the judges dropped a black or a white stone into a urn. In one of our celebrated Greek tragedies, Orestes, who had slain his mother as a judicious act because, in conjunction with her paramour, she had murdered his father, Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, is represented as pursued by the Furies. In his distress, Apollo advises him to go to Athens, and plead his cause before the court of Areopagus—the same court before which Paul stood. **Ac 17** The cause is tried. The judges drop the stones, some black, some white, into the urn; but the goddess Pallas, who is the arbitress of the trial, drops in a white stone: the pebbles being counted are found equal, and Pallas declares that the criminal is acquitted.

I have merely named this as giving us an apt illustration of the meaning of the promise, "I will give him a white stone;" that is, I will seal his acquittal. He was almost like Orestes

pursued by the Furies, or like a criminal tried for his life. Every sin dropped as it were a black stone into the urn against him. But the blessed Lord, from whose decision there is no appeal, drops a white stone into the judicial urn, and this outweighs all the black ones. "O man," he says, "guilty man, I acquit thee; I pronounce thee absolved from all thy sins and offences. Here is the white stone; hold it up before thine accusers, and keep it to the judgment day, that when the books are opened thou mayest produce the white stone, and say, There is my acquittal from the Lord Himself."

Now has the Lord ever given you a white stone? You know how guilt, law and conscience have dropped stone after stone into the urn—condemned thee here, condemned thee there; here was a black stone and there was a black stone. Is there a white stone that will swallow up all these black stones? There is; for when the Lord is pleased to drop a pardoning word into the heart, He empties out of the urn all the black stones, and then comes, in all its blessedness and beauty, the white stone of His sovereign acquittal.

3. But there was a **new name** written upon the stone. It was not merely acquittal, but something more. I take it to be the name of marriage. Just as the wife takes the husband's name and has a new one; so when the Lord brings forth the hidden manna and gives the white stone, He gives with it the marriage ring and changes the name. We find Him speaking by the prophet, "Thou shalt be called by a new name." And what is that name? "Hephzibah," "My delight is in her." The new name, then, is marriage with the Lord; and with the new name are given new rights, new favours, new blessings, and a claim to all that the Bridegroom possesses; because He gives a new name to the bride and calls her for ever His. This is the reason why no man knows it saving he that receives it. Who knows the love of the bridegroom but the bride? And

when marriage puts them into possession of each other, their mutual fondness and affection are known only to themselves.

No, all these promises are given to him that overcometh. "Well," says one, "if none get them but those that overcome, what is to become of me?" Now I will take up your case. If you say that in a careless, discontented, unbelieving mood, it may be that this will be your eternal sentence—to be overcome and cast into, what the Lord calls, outer darkness. But I will take another case. You say, "I am often overcome; but it is my grief. O I wish I had more strength against besetting sins and temptations; but alas! alas! I am continually overcome." Let us see how this works. Does it work to harden or to soften? Some men are hardened by a continual sight and sense of their sins, and some are softened. Some are always complaining, "I am overcome; I have no strength; my temper, my business, my family, all get the better of me." And they are willing it should be so. There is no resistance, no struggle. But there are others who feel the misery of being overcome; and they are crying to one who is stronger than they, to put forth that strength in their behalf, which will make them victors. These will prove conquerors; and as they prove conquerors, they will come in for every promise to the conqueror. Salvation will be their happy lot; and the very tokens they now have here below, the very victories they have gained every time they have been able to raise a fresh Ebenezer, are all so many pledges that the victory is certain, though it may be delayed; and that the Lord, who has thus far wrought in them, will never leave His work till he has accomplished it for their good, and His own glory.