



PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME

by Jim Buller

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are recorded seven messages given by Jesus to the seven churches. We understand these ‘seven churches’ to represent the varied experiences God’s people will go through from the apostolic church to the end-times. As such, these messages are all encompassing, and therefore of great value. Each message closes with a promise:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (2:7.)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. (2:11.)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. (2:17.)

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations — ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (2:26-29.)

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (3:5-6.)

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (3:12-13.)

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (3:21-22.)

Notice that each of these promises are to *those who overcome* —not to those who lean on their own understanding, (see Proverbs 3:5-6), and conclude that overcoming sin and selfishness in their lives is impossible. “But,” I can hear someone say with frustration in their voice, “I *can’t* keep from sinning.” —Of course we can’t. This is exactly *why we need a Savior!*

But Jesus didn’t come to ‘save’ us while we continue to be selfish and sinful. “Behold! The Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin of the world!” “And you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people *from their sins*.” (John 1:29, Matthew 1:21, emphasis supplied.) Don’t listen to Satan, who “is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. . . . Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them.” (*Great Controversy*, page 489.)

To put it simply, if we have surrendered our lives to Jesus, if we are filled with His Spirit and following Him, will He have us do sinful selfish things? —Of course not. It’s when we take our lives back, and step away from His leading that we sin. Therefore, let us strive to *stay* in Jesus always “abiding” in Him, for without Him, we “can do nothing.” (John 15:5.) “Without Christ we cannot subdue a single sin or overcome the smallest temptation.” (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 4*, page 355.)

Therefore, it is all about staying surrendered. Let’s not be like the, “Many who profess to be Christ’s followers” who “have an anxious, troubled heart because they are afraid to trust themselves with God.” And therefore, “they do not make a complete surrender to Him, for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve.” But, “unless they do make this surrender they cannot find peace.” (*The Ministry of Healing*, page 480-481.)

Instead, may the prayer in the following quotation be the continual expression of our heart.

No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul. (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 159.)

WHERE WERE NOAH'S BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son. And he called his name Noah, ... After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died. Genesis 5:28-31

Noah was Lamech's first born, and "After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters." So Noah had a lot of younger brothers and sisters! —and by the time the ark was finished, probably many nieces and nephews as well. But what happened to them?

Notice the following paragraph from *Review and Herald*, August 16, 1906:

In consequence of Adam's transgression, sin was introduced into the fair world that God had created, and men and women became more and still more bold in disobeying his law. The Lord looked down upon the impenitent world, and decided that he must give transgressors an exhibition of his power. He caused Noah to know his purpose, and instructed him to warn the people while building an ark in which the obedient could find shelter until God's indignation was overpast. For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed the message of warning to the antediluvian world; but only a few repented. Some of the carpenters he employed in building the ark, believed the message, but died before the flood; others of Noah's converts backslided. The righteous on the earth were but few, and only eight lived to enter the ark. These were Noah and his family.

It is possible that some of Noah's relatives "became overcomers, and died before the Flood came." (*S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1*, page 1087-1088.) However it is also likely that many of them died *in* the flood because they didn't get in the Ark. Let's be certain to make *our* "calling and election sure," (1 Peter 1:10), faithfully allowing God's grace to change our selfish desires, (see James 4), and enable us to overcome.

SHOULD WE MOVE OUT OF THE CITY, OR STAY BACK TO WORK FOR GOD?

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 81-2

For some time the two classes remained separate. The race of Cain, spreading from the place of their first settlement, dispersed over the plains and valleys where the children of Seth had dwelt; and the latter, in order to escape from their contaminating influence, withdrew to the mountains, and there made their home. So long as this separation continued, they maintained the worship of God in its purity. But in the lapse of time they ventured, little by little, to mingle with the inhabitants of the valleys. This association was productive of the worst results. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." The children of Seth, attracted by the beauty of the daughters of Cain's descendants, displeased the Lord by intermarrying with them. Many of the worshipers of God were beguiled into sin by the allurements that were now constantly

before them, and they lost their peculiar, holy character. Mingling with the depraved, they became like them in spirit and in deeds; the restrictions of the seventh commandment were disregarded, "and they took them wives of all which they chose." The children of Seth went "in the way of Cain" (Jude 11); they fixed their minds upon worldly prosperity and enjoyment and neglected the commandments of the Lord. Men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Romans 1:21. Therefore "God gave them over to a mind void of judgment." Verse 28, margin. Sin spread abroad in the earth like a deadly leprosy.

Evangelism, page 78

When iniquity abounds in a nation, there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city. Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom.—Manuscript 94, 1903.

S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1, page 1087-1088

He [Enoch] did not make his abode with the wicked. He did not locate in Sodom, thinking to save Sodom. He placed himself and his family where the atmosphere would be as pure as possible. Then at times he went forth to the inhabitants of the world with his God-given message. Every visit he made to the world was painful to him. He saw and understood something of the leprosy of sin. After proclaiming his message, he always took back with him to his place of retirement some who had received the warning. Some of these became overcomers, and died before the Flood came. But some had lived so long in the corrupting influence of sin that they could not endure righteousness (MS 42, 1900).

Country Living, page 29-30 (Letter 182, 1902)

As far as possible, our institutions should be located away from the cities. We must have workers for these institutions, and if they are located in the city, that means that families of our people must settle near them. But it is not God's will that His people shall settle in the cities, where there is constant turmoil and confusion. Their children should be spared this; for the whole system is demoralized by the hurry and rush and noise. The Lord desires His people to move into the country, where they can settle on the land, and raise their own fruit and vegetables, and where their children can be brought in direct contact with the works of God in nature. Take your families away from the cities is my message.

The truth must be spoken, whether men will hear, or whether men will forbear. The cities are filled with temptation. We should plan our work in such a way as to keep our young people as far as possible from this contamination.

The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, "Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth."--Letter 182, 1902.

“REMEMBER LOT’S WIFE”

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 174

The wife of Lot was a selfish, irreligious woman, and her influence was exerted to separate her husband from Abraham. But for her, Lot would not have remained in Sodom.

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 159-162

The angels revealed to Lot the object of their mission: "We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." The strangers whom Lot had endeavored to protect, now promised to protect him, and to save also all the members of his family who would flee with him from the wicked city. The mob had wearied themselves out and departed, and Lot went out to warn his children. He repeated the words of the angels, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." But he seemed to them as one that mocked. They laughed at what they called his superstitious fears. His daughters were influenced by their husbands. They were well enough off where they were. They could see no evidence of danger. Everything was just as it had been. They had great possessions, and they could not believe it possible that beautiful Sodom would be destroyed.

Lot returned sorrowfully to his home and told the story of his failure. Then the angels bade him arise and take his wife and the two daughters who were yet in his house and leave the city. But Lot delayed. Though daily distressed at beholding deeds of violence, he had no true conception of the debasing and abominable iniquity practiced in that vile city. He did not realize the terrible necessity for God's judgments to put a check on sin. Some of his children clung to Sodom, and his wife refused to depart without them. The thought of leaving those whom he held dearest on earth seemed more than he could bear. It was hard to forsake his luxurious home and all the wealth acquired by the labors of his whole life, to go forth a destitute wanderer. Stupefied with sorrow, he lingered, loath to depart. But for the angels of God, they would all have perished in the ruin of Sodom. The heavenly messengers took him and his wife and daughters by the hand and led them out of the city.

Here the angels left them, and turned back to Sodom to accomplish their work of destruction. Another—He with whom Abraham had pleaded—drew near to Lot. In all the cities of the plain, even ten righteous persons had not been found; but in answer to the patriarch's prayer, the one man who feared God was snatched from destruction. The command was given with startling vehemence: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Hesitancy or delay now would be fatal. To cast one lingering look upon the devoted city, to tarry for one moment from regret to leave so beautiful a home, would have cost their life. The storm of divine judgment was only waiting that these poor fugitives might make their escape.

But Lot, confused and terrified, pleaded that he could not do as he was required lest some evil should overtake him and he should die. Living in that wicked city, in the midst of unbelief, his faith had grown dim. The Prince of heaven was by his side, yet he pleaded for his own life as though God, who had manifested such care and love for him, would not still preserve him. He should have trusted himself wholly to the divine

Messenger, giving his will and his life into the Lord's hands without a doubt or a question. But like so many others, he endeavored to plan for himself: "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: O, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." The city here mentioned was Bela, afterward called Zoar. It was but a few miles from Sodom, and, like it, was corrupt and doomed to destruction. But Lot asked that it might be spared, urging that this was but a small request; and his desire was granted. The Lord assured him, "I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken." Oh, how great the mercy of God toward His erring creatures!

Again the solemn command was given to hasten, for the fiery storm would be delayed but little longer. But one of the fugitives ventured to cast a look backward to the doomed city, and she became a monument of God's judgment. If Lot himself had manifested no hesitancy to obey the angels' warning, but had earnestly fled toward the mountains, without one word of pleading or remonstrance, his wife also would have made her escape. The influence of his example would have saved her from the sin that sealed her doom. But his hesitancy and delay caused her to lightly regard the divine warning. While her body was upon the plain, her heart clung to Sodom, and she perished with it. She rebelled against God because His judgments involved her possessions and her children in the ruin. Although so greatly favored in being called out from the wicked city, she felt that she was severely dealt with, because the wealth that it had taken years to accumulate must be left to destruction. Instead of thankfully accepting deliverance, she presumptuously looked back to desire the life of those who had rejected the divine warning. Her sin showed her to be unworthy of life, for the preservation of which she felt so little gratitude.

We should beware of treating lightly God's gracious provisions for our salvation. There are Christians who say, "I do not care to be saved unless my companion and children are saved with me." They feel that heaven would not be heaven to them without the presence of those who are so dear. But have those who cherish this feeling a right conception of their own relation to God, in view of His great goodness and mercy toward them? Have they forgotten that they are bound by the strongest ties of love and honor and loyalty to the service of their Creator and Redeemer? The invitations of mercy are addressed to all; and because our friends reject the Saviour's pleading love, shall we also turn away? The redemption of the soul is precious. Christ has paid an infinite price for our salvation, and no one who appreciates the value of this great sacrifice or the worth of the soul will despise God's offered mercy because others choose to do so. The very fact that others are ignoring His just claims should arouse us to greater diligence, that we may honor God ourselves, and lead all whom we can influence, to accept His love.