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CHAPTER ONE

A LIFE OF CONSTANT TRIUMPH

God's will for our lives is *constant victory*. This is clearly taught in a number of Scriptures.

Consider just a few:

"Thanks be to God Who always leads us in His triumph in Christ" (2 Cor.2:14).

"In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him Who loves us" (Rom.8:37).

"I am writing these things to you that you may not sin" (1 Jn.2:1).

In spite of these and other Scriptures, it is still a difficult task to convince many believers that God wants them to live victorious lives.

If we take Scripture just as it is written and believe it simply, as a little child, then this message will come through to us clearly. But if we rely on our reason, we may find many convincing arguments why such a life is *not* possible in this evil world. Many *unbelieving* "believers" will then add their testimony to what our reason tells us. And then we will convince ourselves that a victorious life is impossible in this world.

Unless we are convinced first of all that God wants us to live in continuous victory, we will never be able to have faith for such a life. And without faith, it is impossible to enter the victorious life. Everything in the Christian life is utterly dependent on faith. And faith is based on the revelation that God has given us in His Word.

Even if you have lived in defeat for many years, it makes no difference. If only you can see this truth of a life of constant victory clearly in God's Word, it would be the first step towards a victorious life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF FAITH

1 John 2:6 says, "The one who says he abides in Christ ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked".

How did Jesus walk? Was it in victory *some* of the time, or *most* of the time or *all* the time? We know the answer. He was tempted in all points as we are, but He never sinned.

"We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb.4:15).

We are now told to *walk even as He walked*. Is that possible here on earth? Would God tell us to do something that He knows very well we cannot do? No. That is unimaginable. Even earthly fathers do not make unreasonable demands on their children. How much less God!

Some of the saddest words written in the New Testament are found in *Matthew 13:58* - *"He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief"*.

The parallel passage in *Mark 6:5* states, *"He could not do any miracle there"*.

He had *wanted* to do great things for those people in His home-town. They *needed* those miracles too. But He was *limited by their unbelief*.

Unbelief ties the hands of Almighty God so that He cannot do for us the things that He wants to.

I wonder if there have been miracles that God had wanted to do for *you*, but which He could not do, because of your unbelief. At the judgement-seat of Christ, will any of us have to hear these words, "I could

not do all that I wanted for you and through you, because of your unbelief?" What regret there will be in our hearts if we discover that, at the end of our earthly life! It is good to think about it now.

My early years as a born-again Christian were spent among a group of assemblies that majored on the study of the Scriptures. I am, in one sense, thankful to God for this, for it enabled me to have a good basic knowledge of the Scriptures. But their study was mostly through human reason, without the revelation of the Holy Spirit. We studied the Bible like students study chemistry in school. We discovered the meanings of the Old Testament types etc., but we were still defeated by sin in our lives. I knew that God had forgiven my sins; but I didn't have faith for anything more.

When I saw the truth of the baptism in the Spirit in the Word and began to seek God for it, I found that I just couldn't believe. I fasted and prayed and was willing to pay any price for it, but I found it extremely difficult to believe that God had heard my request and granted it. Jesus taught that whenever we prayed we were to believe that we had already received what we had asked for.

"I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you" (Mk. 11:24).

It took me a long time - many years - to come to simple, childlike faith in that statement. Finally, by God's grace, I did break through to believe that God had heard my prayer and granted it. I was baptized in the Spirit, by faith. The gift of tongues that *unexpectedly* followed, was then only a confirmation of what I had already received by faith.

As I look back now over those years of struggling, I see clearly that what hindered me was unbelief.

The same principle applies in entering into a life of victory over sin. We can fast and pray and thirst - and still never get anywhere - until we *believe* that God *can* and *will* lead us into such a life. Satan knows that you can't get anything from God except through faith. So you can imagine how he will try to fill your heart with unbelief. Unbelief is a greater danger than lying or adultery, for these latter are easily recognized as sins, whereas unbelief isn't.

Hebrews 3:12 says, "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God."

An evil heart of unbelief can cause us to fall away from God. Unbelief is the root cause of all the other sins - as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

Romans 6:14 states, "Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace."

There the Holy Spirit tells us very plainly that if we are under grace, sin cannot have dominion over us. That is so plainly written that even a child can understand it. In spite of that, many believers still do not believe in the possibility of living a life of victory over sin.

God wants you to live in victory. It doesn't matter how dirty your thought-life is, or how long you have been defeated by anger. The Lord can set you completely free and give you a pure heart. But He can't do it for you until you believe.

The Bible says that what we believe in our heart, we must confess with our mouth. *Rom. 10:10* states, *"With the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation"*.

This is an important principle - for it is through the confession of our mouth that we give expression to our faith. This in turn leads to deliverance from sin's power. And so we must speak the word of our testimony to Satan, saying, "I believe that God is going to lead me into a life of victory over sin."

"They overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death." (Rev. 12:11).

Keep making that confession, each time you fall, until victory becomes a reality in your life. Don't be discouraged if it doesn't come overnight. God will surely honour the confession of your mouth. You too can overcome Satan.

CHAPTER THREE

TAKING GOD'S WORD SERIOUSLY

A bad habit that many believers have is that of taking God's Word lightly. Take Jesus' words in *Matthew 12:36, 37* for example: *"Every careless (idle) word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgement. For by your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned."*

Most believers do not believe that they will have to literally give an account for every single useless word that they have spoken. When we really believe this, all backbiting, gossiping, evil-speaking and anger will be eliminated from our lives. All who take these words of Jesus seriously will be radical in cutting out useless words from every part of their speech.

Jesus says here that we will be justified by our *words*. We all know about justification by faith. But faith without *works* is dead, and a faith that does not cleanse our speech is a *dead* faith.

Think of all the words that you have spoken (or written) during the last three months - at home and in the office, to husband, wife, children, servants etc., Would a tape-recording of your speech prove that you are a justified child of God, different from the world around you? Or would your words be similar to the speech of unbelievers?

The speech of many believers has not been cleansed, because they have not taken the words of Jesus seriously. This in turn is because they do not fear God. They fear men more than they fear God. We cannot hope to make spiritual progress in our life if we don't develop the habit of taking God's word seriously.

James 1:26 says, *"If any one thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless."*

If a man cannot control his tongue, his Christianity is worthless - for, as Jesus said, the words we speak show what our heart is like. *"The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."*(*Mt.12:34*). The way we use our tongue is one of the clearest indications of our spiritual condition.

Here is another example: God's Word says that husbands should *never* be bitter against their wives. *"Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them."*(*Col.3:19*).

What does that mean? Does it permit a husband to be bitter against his wife *even once*? We know that when God's Word forbids adultery or murder, we must not commit such sins *even once*. Yet when we read

that a husband should not be bitter against his wife, it does not hit us with the same force. Why is that? It's because we pick and choose which commands of God's Word are serious and which are not. We don't realise that all of God's Word must be taken seriously.

Those who take every word of God seriously will mourn over their sin, each time they fail. Thus they will find the comfort (strength) of the Holy Spirit, and be led into a life of victory. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (strengthened)."* (Mt.5:4).

Here then is another secret of victory: *Take every Word of God seriously and mourn over your sin whenever you come short of God's standards.*

Thus you will prove that you fear God - and the fear of God is the beginning of that wisdom that leads to a victorious life.

God looks with grace and favour at those who are broken and contrite in their spirit and who tremble at His Word.

"To this one I will look, declares the Lord, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word" (Isa.66:2).

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S DEALINGS ARE ALL IN LOVE

God has always required obedience from man. Under the old covenant, the Israelites were given commandments to obey. But they discovered that they could not keep God's laws perfectly.

Under the new covenant, God promises to write His laws in our hearts and minds so that we will not only obey Him but *love* to obey Him. God's promise is: *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* (Ezek. 36:27)

It is only through obeying His commandments that we can have fellowship with God.

Obedience however is something that many believers have not understood. Most believers have so misunderstood 'grace' that they consider obedience to be an Old Covenant requirement. God's commandments, as a result, are considered to be a heavy burden. This is a Satanic deception. It is the result of an ignorance of God's love. All of God's commandments are for our good and are meant to set us free. They all originate in the heart of a God Who loves us perfectly.

Moses says (concerning God giving His laws to Israel at Sinai), *"At God's right hand there was a fiery law for His people - indeed (this proves that) He loves His people"* (Deut.33:2,3 - margin). The fact that God gives us His laws is a proof of His intense love for us.

Some of God's commandments may require self-denial on our part. But in the long run we will discover that they are for our very best. A father doesn't give commands to his children to burden them or harm them - but only to help them. This is how we need to see the commands that God gives us too. To have faith is to believe in a God Who is perfect in love. When we have such faith, we will delight to do God's commandments, at any cost.

Here lies the reason for so much of our defeat. The Devil has convinced people that God's commandments are either unnecessary, or a burden. If we don't understand why God calls us to do something, that only proves our own immaturity. One day, when we are a little more mature, we *will* understand.

When children are compelled to go to school, they may not understand why their parents won't allow them to stay at home and play. They may think their parents are being very hard towards them. But it is love that makes those parents compel their children to get an education.

Like those little children, we too don't often understand God's ways. But if we believed in His love, we would obey all His Word and submit to all His dealings, without any question.

Consider the matter of suffering. Why does a God of love allow us to go through suffering? That's because suffering is a part of the syllabus in our spiritual education. It is through suffering that God leads us on to maturity. If you have not had much opportunity to suffer, you certainly could not have learnt much in life that has any spiritual value.

Perhaps you grumbled and complained so much the last time you had a little suffering, that God now allows you to go your own way. That is sad, when God puts you on the shelf like that. I'd rather go through suffering every day of my life than be set aside by God on a shelf.

It is foolish to compare ourselves with others, when God leads us through suffering. That would be like your children wondering why they have to go to school when the poor children in the slums can play in the mud all day. All of God's dealings with us are in perfect love. He wants us to be happy - not with the superficial, frothy happiness of the world, but with that deep, everlasting happiness that comes through holiness of life. And there is just no way to be holy except through suffering.

"He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness." (Heb. 12:10).

Jesus was the happiest man Who ever walked on this earth. Yet He was the One Who suffered the most. His happiness came out of doing the will of His Father - not by having an easy way through life. He knew His Father as perfect love and so He joyfully submitted to all that the Father sent His way. That was the secret of His life.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD LOVES US AS HE LOVED JESUS

The root cause of all our spiritual problems lies in our not knowing God as a Loving Father and a Sovereign God.

One truth that has revolutionized my Christian life is the glorious revelation that Jesus gave us that the Father loves us just as He loved Him,

Jesus prayed to the Father, *".....that the world may know that Thou didst love them, even as thou didst love me"* (Jn.17:23). Jesus prayed here that the world around us might know this truth. But it has to grip our hearts first, before the world can realise it.

All Christians believe theoretically in a loving Father in heaven. But the fact that they are often worried and anxious and so full of insecurity and fear, proves that they don't believe it deep down in their hearts.

There are very few who would dare to believe that God loves them *as much as he loves Jesus!* None of us could dare to believe such a truth if Jesus had not plainly told us that it was so.

Once your eyes are opened to this glorious truth, it will change your whole outlook on life. All murmuring and depression and gloom will vanish from your life altogether. I know this can happen, for it happened to me.

I lived in bondage to depression for many years and was defeated. That was not God's will for me; but I just couldn't break free from it. Things have been different for me ever since my eyes were opened to the truth that God loves me just as He loves Jesus. I now see that everything that comes my way has come from the hand of a loving Father. I've seen that He cares for me as the apple of His eye; and so no circumstance in life can ever make me grumble or get depressed now. I have learnt, as Paul says, the secret of being content and praising God in all my circumstances.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!.....Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."(Phil.4:4,11).

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."(1 Thess. 5:18).

This is now the unshakable foundation of my life: *GOD LOVES ME AS MUCH AS HE LOVES JESUS.*

It's not because you don't fast and pray sufficiently that you are not entering into the victorious life. Victory comes, not through self-effort but through faith. "Faith in what?", you may ask. Faith in God's perfect love for you.

Many believers live under the condemnation of Satan who keeps telling them, "You are not fasting enough. You are not praying enough. You are not witnessing enough. You are not studying the Bible enough", etc., etc., They are constantly being whipped up by such thoughts of self-condemnation into an endless round of activity and into a multitude of dead works.

Do you realise that all your self-discipline, fasting, praying, tithing and witnessing are dead works, if they do not originate in love for God? And they cannot originate in love unless you are secure in God's love first.

Paul's prayer for the Christians at Ephesus was that they might be rooted and grounded in the love of God. *".....that He (God) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love....."*(Eph. 3:16,17).

The Ephesian Christians were already converted and baptised in the Spirit. Yet they needed to be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man so that they might be rooted and grounded in God's perfect love for them, understanding the length, breadth, height and depth of that love. It was only after that, that Paul went on to speak of the gifts by which the body of Christ can be built up. *"To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.....and He gave some as apostles, and some as*

prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”(Eph.4:7,11,12).

That perfect security in the love of God must be underneath us always. We must be rooted and grounded in it, if our ministry is to be effective.

Elsewhere, the New Testament speaks of this as *“entering into rest”*. *“We who have faith* (in God’s perfect love for us) *enter into His rest”*, the apostle says (Heb.4:2). He then urges us to strive with all our hearts to enter this rest: *“Let us be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience”* (Heb. 4:11). It is easy to fall away when we are not *‘resting’* in perfect security in the love of God.

The world is full of people who are looking for someone to love them. Many Christians go from church to church, wanting to be loved. Some seek for love in friendships and some in marriage. But all this search can end in disappointment. Like orphans, the children of Adam are insecure and as a result are again and again overcome by bouts of self-pity. The sad thing is that even after conversion, many still remain insecure, when there is no need for them to be so.

What is the answer of the gospel to this problem? The answer is to find our security in the love of God.

Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that the hairs on their head were all numbered and that a God Who fed the millions of birds and clothed the millions of flowers would certainly take care of them.

A greater argument than all of that, is: *“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up freely for us, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things “* (Rom. 8:32).

As God cared for Jesus, He will care for you too.

One reason why God allows us at times to be disappointed with our fellow human beings is so that we might learn to stop leaning on man. He desires to free us from such idolatry (for it is a form of idolatry to depend on man), so that we might learn to lean wholly upon Him alone. And so when God orders your circumstances in such a way that you are disappointed on every side, that shouldn’t discourage you. It is just God weaning you away from the arm of flesh so that you might learn to live by faith in Him. Learn to find your security in the fact that God loves you as He loved Jesus.

All competition and jealousy among Christians arises out of this same insecurity. A man who is secure in the love of God and who believes that God made no mistake in making him the way He made him, and in giving him the gifts and talents He gave him, can never possibly be jealous of another or compete with another. All problems of relationships among believers are also basically due to this same insecurity.

Just think how many of your problems will be solved when your eyes are opened to this one truth - that God loves you exactly as He loves Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD HAS A PURPOSE IN EVERY TRIAL

Life becomes wonderful when we see that God has a purpose - a glorious purpose - in everything He permits to come into our lives. When He says 'No' to our prayers, that too is an answer that comes from a heart of perfect love.

When God sent fiery serpents to bite the Israelites in the wilderness, was that out of love? *"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died."* (Num. 21:6). That was certainly an act of love, for that was the means that God used to make those Israelites repent and turn back to Him so that He could bless them. He wanted to bless them, but He could not do so until they had repented.

"I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for calamity - to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

One reason why God has permitted this world to be an uncomfortable place to live in - with disease and sickness and poisonous snakes etc., - is so that people may turn to Him in their distress - so that He might bless them. And so we can see how God uses even the evil (that Satan causes), to work for the furtherance of His purposes.

When we meet the ransomed in eternity, and hear their stories, we will discover more fully how God used snake-bites, financial difficulties, cancers etc., to turn people away from sin to become His children. We will also hear how God used suffering to sanctify His children so that they might partake of His nature.

In that day, we will thank God for many things that we could not understand here on earth. But the man of faith does not have to wait until that day. He believes in God's wisdom and love right now - and so he has already begun to give thanks for *everything*.

The *ultimate* purpose in all of God's dealings with us is that we might *partake of His nature*. God works all things together for our good - the good being that we might be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren". (Rom. 8:28,29).

Why does God allow us at times to lose money accidentally, or to be cheated by unscrupulous people. Many of us have had the experience of having our pockets picked in crowded trains and buses. I've always made it a point to pray for the thief or the cheat on such occasions. But apart from that, God also desires to detach us from an inordinate attachment to money and material things. He doesn't want us to be so calculating, that we worry over every rupee that we lose and rejoice over every rupee that we gain! He wants us to find our joy in Him - a joy that cannot be increased by any material gain or decreased by any material loss.

Jesus walked on earth like that - and we are called to walk even as He walked. The Bible says, *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus "* (Phil. 2:5).

If someone had given Jesus a gift of ten thousand denarii, out of gratitude for His ministry, that would not have increased Jesus' joy even slightly. His joy was already full and overflowing in His Father.

At the same time, Jesus' joy would not have decreased through any material loss either. Judas Iscariot was often pilfering much of the money that came in as gifts to Jesus. Jesus knew about it; and although He must have felt sorry for Judas, He was never disturbed over the loss of the money itself.

What a different story it is today, with many preachers, and their attitudes to the offerings of God's people! But let us leave the preachers alone! What about us? Can our joy be increased or decreased by material things? Then we certainly need to work out our salvation from such an attitude, by judging ourselves.

If you are really earnest about partaking of the life of Jesus, God will allow a thousand-and-one things to happen to you, in order to deliver you from the love of material things, from seeking the honour of men, from self-pity and many other un-Christlike attitudes.

He won't compel you to go that way if you don't want to. If you are content to live the substandard, defeated life that most believers around you live, He will leave you alone.

But if you are thirsting for God's best, He will deal with you ruthlessly, cutting out the cancers that are ruining you and destroying the idols that corrupt you. He will allow you to suffer pain, disappointment, loss, shattered hopes, humiliation, unjust criticism etc., in order to bring you to that place of stability - where you can't be shaken any more.

Then it won't make any difference to you thereafter, whether you are rich or poor, criticised or praised, honoured or dishonoured. Having gone down into the death of Christ to everything of this world, you would have partaken of the life of Jesus that causes you to walk like a king on this earth.

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body"(2 Cor.4:10).

Few find this way to the abundant life in Christ because few are willing to pay the price - of total death to Self. We cannot live by faith if we do not die to Self. If we are not willing to be crucified with Christ, our knowledge of God's perfect love will always remain theoretical. We cannot be the disciples of Jesus, if we do not forsake everything of this world,

Jesus said, *"No one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."*(Lk. 14:33).

We looked at *John 17:23* earlier: *"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me."*

Jesus wasn't praying there for the world or for carnal Christians. He was praying for His eleven disciples who had forsaken everything to follow Him. Those disciples could find a security in the Father's love that carnal Christians and worldly people could never know.

Why is any Christian a carnal Christian? Isn't it because the Devil has deceived him into thinking that he can be happier if, instead of yielding himself totally to God, he tries to get "the best of both worlds" (as they say). But this is a deception.

If we believed in God's perfect love, we would gladly give up everything for Him, unreservedly. We would then be totally free from anxiety.

Philippians 4:6,7 commands us: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Carnal Christians are always wondering whether their boat will sink in the middle of the storm. Jesus could sleep right through the storm, because He was secure in the love of His Father. He knew that the Devil couldn't drown Him so easily. His Father was watching over Him all the time. How wonderful life becomes when we realise that the extent to which the Father loved and cared for Jesus, He loves and cares for us too.

When we finally see God, we will be surprised to discover how much greater His love for us was, than we had ever imagined. We will then realise how foolish all our anxieties were.

But what will be the use of realising it then? *Now* is the time to have our eyes opened to the fact of God's love and to live by faith.

CHAPTER SEVEN

YOU CANNOT BE TESTED BEYOND YOUR ABILITY

1 Corinthians 10:13 is a glorious verse. There is a tremendous comfort in it for all of us. It says, "God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (trial) will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

People often say that they are going through unbearable trials and sorrows. That may be true for the children of Adam; but it certainly *cannot* be true for the disciples of Jesus - for God watches carefully over every trial and temptation that comes their way.

Satan and those who hate us, may desire to trouble us in many ways. But they *cannot* get at us without God's permission. Even in the Old Testament, Satan realised that God had put a hedge around Job, so that no evil could touch him.

Satan told God, "*Hast Thou not made a hedge about Job and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*"(Job 1:10).

But for Job's sanctification, God allowed that hedge to be opened up, and Satan was permitted to attack him. The extent of the opening in the hedge was however determined by God. It was opened a *little bit* initially (Job 1) and a *little more* later on (Job 2). The Sabeans and the Chaldeans who stole Job's property had all come through the opening that God had made in that hedge. "*The Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword..... The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword.*"(Job 1:15,17).

The storm that blew down the house on Job's children, also came through that same opening in the hedge.

The opening however was not wide enough for disease to come through to attack Job's body. But later, when God opened up the hedge a little more, disease too could come through and afflict Job. Job didn't realise initially that God was in control of everything that was going on. He realised it much later - at the end of the story. But we can't blame him, for he did not have the written Scriptures, as we have. But now we have the Word of God to show us Who controls the opening in the hedge.

The hedge is actually God Himself as a wall of fire around us. "*For I will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst, says the Lord*" (Zechariah 2:5).

But, as we read in the Old Testament about Elisha's servant, our eyes are often blind and we don't see the wall of fire that surrounds us. Elisha however saw it and so he had no fear. "*When the attendant of the man of God (Elisha) had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'* Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."(2 Kings 6:15-17).

The servant was terrified because he couldn't see what Elisha saw. When Elisha prayed for him, his eyes were opened. Then he came to rest. We need to have our eyes opened too.

God knows when to close up the hedge too. He controls our circumstances very carefully and exactly, according to our spiritual capacity and according to our eagerness to press on to His highest.

When we are spiritually immature and weak, God won't allow us to be tempted by any massive temptation. Neither will He allow Satan to attack us too violently. At the same time, if God sees that we are not interested in His purpose for our lives, He will allow us to have an easy way through life. The loss will then be ours in eternity.

It was because Job was one of God's chosen servants that God allowed him to face such intense suffering. God won't allow that in everyone's life, for few have matured to the place where they can bear it. Very few are interested in such spiritual maturity, in any case.

Jesus was taken by His Father through every possible temptation that we can ever face. It was thus that He became perfect.

See *Hebrews 4:15* : *"We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."*

Look at *Hebrews 5:7-9* as well : *"In the days of His flesh, when He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation".*

That's how Jesus completed His education *as a Man* and became perfect. There is no other way for us to be perfect either.

The fact that God won't ever allow us to be tempted or tried beyond our ability is the reason why we can be sure that we can live in victory *all the time*. If it were not for God's guarantee given to us in *1 Corinthians 10:13*, we could not have had such confidence.

God guarantees that every trial and temptation that comes our way is conquerable. Why then do we fall?

Because we don't take the way of escape that God offers us in each trial and temptation.

What is that way of escape?

It is to *humble ourselves* - even to the death of the cross, as Jesus did. *"He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*(*Phil.2:8*)

This is the narrow way to the abundant life, that few find. Pride is so deeply rooted in the flesh, that few find this glorious way of humility - or even understand what it means to humble oneself. This is indeed a mystery - but God will reveal it to all who are wholehearted.

We may think that it is the pressures of life that make life unbearable for us. Actually, it is our pride - the high thoughts that we have about ourselves - that make life difficult.

I have meditated on this at times when I have had to travel in a crowded, unreserved compartment in a train. Not having a seat to sit on, I've had to sit on the floor in a corner, or at times to stand. The compartment is packed with people and luggage, right at the starting station. It gets worse at each station along the way, with more people and more luggage coming in. The pressure constantly increases. And then I've thought, "If only I could become the size of an ant here, there would be no more pressure on me." I find the pressure too much, because of my size as a human being. A fatter man would certainly find it worse! It all depends on our size. An ant however, would find that crowded compartment quite spacious, and wouldn't be complaining about the pressure at all.

That anyway, is the answer spiritually. When the pressure increases from the outside, if I can become smaller and smaller in my own eyes, the pressure eases and gradually disappears. God desires to reduce us. He has to reduce us to *nothing* in our own estimation, before He can fulfil His purpose through us.

Why, for example, do we get offended with others? Isn't it because we have a high opinion about ourselves and about our rights? We feel that people are not giving us the respect that we deserve, or perhaps that they are taking away our rights.

We feel hurt when people speak evil about us behind our backs. It is our bloated pride that causes us such suffering. Prick that balloon of pride and when we are truly deflated, we'll find that there is no pressure at all.

That is the secret. May God open our eyes to see it.

While people around us are complaining about a thousand-and-one things, we will have no complaints whatsoever, because we have taken the way of escape - of humbling ourselves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOD GIVES HIS GRACE ONLY TO THE HUMBLE

There is yet another reason why God wants us to humble ourselves - and that is, in order to give us His grace. God cannot violate His own laws - and one of the laws that He has bound Himself by, is to resist the proud and to give grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). However much He may love us, He cannot give us His grace, if we are proud. And if we don't get grace from God, we cannot live in victory. The power of temptation can be overcome only by the power of God's grace.

"The Law came by Moses but grace came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Under the Law (the old covenant), people struggled and struggled against temptation in their hearts, but were always defeated.

Saul of Tarsus lived a perfect life according to the *external* standards of God's laws. In *Philippians 3:6*, he gives his testimony concerning his own life, *"As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless"*. Yet he found that he was powerless against lust and covetousness in his heart. He says in *Romans 7:8*, *"Sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind."*

The Law could not enable people to keep their hearts pure from lust. It was not meant to. The Law was meant to show man his sinfulness and his helplessness against the lusts of the flesh, and to keep him from external sin through the fear of punishment. A man could have a perfect life externally, in the eyes of men, through the Law. Yet his heart could be like a sewer of sin! That was the best that the Law could accomplish.

But the good news of the new covenant through Jesus Christ, is that *what the Law could not do, grace can.*

God's grace is not just His undeserved favour *forgiving* our sins. It is more than that. It is God's *power* that can enable us to *overcome* sin.

In *2 Cor. 12:9*, 'grace' is equated with 'power', for the Lord says, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*"

This grace (power) comes to help us when we are tempted. *Hebrews 4:16* says, "*Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*"

"*It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace*" (*Heb. 13:9*). Then we can keep our heart from being defiled by lust and covetousness. This is the good news of the new covenant.

In *Hebrews 8:10* God says, "*I will put My laws into their minds and I will write them upon their hearts*". Under the old covenant (the Law), God told man, "*Thou shalt...*" and "*Thou shalt not...*". But notice (in this verse) that under the new covenant, God Himself takes the responsibility saying, "*I will put...*", "*I will write...*". God does His work in our minds and hearts through the *Spirit of grace*.

Through grace, "*God works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure*" (*Phil. 2:13*). Thus "*the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled inside us*" (*Rom. 8:4*). This was the main purpose with which God poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It was '*the Spirit of grace*' that God "*poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem on that day*" (*Zech. 12:10*).

That river is still flowing as a waterfall from God's throne to earth today. The inhabitants of God's heavenly Jerusalem (the church) may still come under that waterfall and be drenched with God's grace.

Then the promise in *Romans 6:14* will be fulfilled, "*Sin shall not be master over you, for you are under grace, and not under law.*"

There is only *one* condition, in order to come under this waterfall - and that is that we *humble* ourselves.

Grace can exalt us over sin, over our circumstances, over depression, over bad moods, over Satan, over bitterness, over hatred, jealousy, lust and every other evil. "*Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you*" (*1 Pet. 5:6*).

What is "*the mighty hand of God*" that we are to humble ourselves under? It is the hand that orders all the circumstances and people that cross our daily path. To humble ourselves is to gladly submit to all of God's dealings with us - in all our circumstances - even when He allows people to ride over our heads.

We need never fear that this will become too much for us to bear, for God watches the gap in the hedge and knows how much to open at a time. He also knows when to close it.

If we are overcome by any sin, there can be only one reason for our being defeated - our pride. We cannot overcome sin if God does not give us grace. And God does not give us grace, when we are proud. Each time we find ourselves defeated, we need to go to God and say, "Lord show me where the pride lies in me that hindered You from giving me grace to overcome." If we are quick to judge ourselves in each failure, like that, victory can be ours in a very short time.

Victory over sin is our birthright under the new covenant. Don't let Satan deprive you of it through ignorance or pride. If it takes time to get victory, it is because it takes time for God to humble us. It takes time for God to shatter that self-confidence that we as children of Adam are filled with.

One form of pride is to think that we have the strength to overcome sin. We think that all we need is a little more determination, a little more self-discipline, a little more prayer and fasting and a little more Bible-knowledge. When we read about victory in a book like this, we can think that now that we have grasped the doctrine clearly, victory will be easy.

We go forth with great confidence, but we don't realise yet that our confidence is still in ourselves and not in God's grace. And lo and behold, we fall so miserably.

But do you think that we learn the lesson with one fall? No, we don't. And so God has to allow us to fall again and again - repeatedly - until one day we give up all hope of ever getting victory, because we have fallen so often, despite all our good resolutions. That is the zero-point, at which God can lead us into the promised land of victory.

In the Old Testament, God brought the Israelites who left Egypt, to the borders of the promised land, two years after they had left Egypt. But they could not enter in, because of their unbelief (See *Numbers chapters 13 & 14*). And so God allowed those proud, self-confident Israelites to wander in the wilderness for another *"thirty-eight years, until all the men of war (symbolising the strength of Self) had perished"* (*Deut.2:14*). Then they came to a zero-point. And then they could enter in. Then the Jerichos fell before them, without any effort on their part.

God has to reduce us to zero, before He can do His work in and through us. It doesn't have to take forty years. You can enter in within a year or two, if you are radical, and if you are determined to humble yourself at any cost.

As long as we keep blaming our circumstances or other people we can never hope for victory. But if we humble ourselves, believing that God controls all our circumstances, and that no temptation will ever be too much for us to overcome, then victory is assured.

CHAPTER NINE

GOD CONTROLS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

For our faith to be unshakable, it must rest securely on three facts concerning God - His perfect love, His absolute power and His perfect wisdom. If we are convinced about His love, we must be equally convinced about His sovereign power as well.

That's why Jesus taught us to preface our prayers by addressing God as *"Our Father Who art in Heaven."*

"Our Father" reminds us of His *perfect love*; and *"Who art in Heaven"* reminds us that He is the Almighty God Who *rules over everything* that happens on earth in absolute sovereignty. Being God, He is also *perfectly wise*, and so orders our ways perfectly according to His wisdom.

"As for God, His way is blameless (His wisdom is perfect)..... and He makes my way blameless. (He orders my circumstances perfectly)" (Psa. 18:30,32).

If God were not perfect in love, power and wisdom, our faith would not have an adequate foundation to rest on. But because He is all three, we need never be shaken.

Faith is the leaning of the human personality on God in total confidence in His perfect love, His absolute power and His perfect wisdom.

We will all readily acknowledge that God's wisdom is perfect. His ways are as much higher than ours as heaven is above earth.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa.55:8,9).

That's why we can't often understand the way He works or the way He orders our affairs. If a child cannot understand all the ways of his father, then it is not surprising if we cannot understand all of God's ways either. As we grow spiritually and partake more of the Divine nature, however, we will begin to understand more and more of God's ways.

The total sovereignty of God over all people and circumstances, is a matter concerning which many believers remain in doubt. They may give lip-acknowledgement to it, but they don't believe it "works" in the situations of daily life. Yet the Scriptures are full of examples of how God worked sovereignly on behalf of His people - and often in the most unlikely ways.

Many of us are familiar with the obviously miraculous ways in which God worked on behalf of His people - such as the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt etc. But we have often missed seeing the greater miracles by which God turned the tables on Satan when Satan attacked God's people.

The case of Joseph is a classic. God had a plan for that eleventh son of Jacob to make him the second ruler in Egypt by the time he was thirty.

Joseph was a God-fearing lad and therefore he was hated by Satan. And so Satan instigated his elder brothers to get rid of him. But God ensured that they didn't take Joseph's life. They managed, however, to sell him off to some Ishmaelite traders. But where do you think those traders took Joseph? To Egypt, of course! That was the fulfillment of *Step One* in God's plan!

In Egypt, Joseph was bought by Potiphar. This too was arranged by God. Potiphar's wife was an evil woman. Taking a fancy to Joseph, she tried to entice him again and again. Finally when she found that she could not succeed, she accused Joseph falsely and had him cast in jail. But who do you think Joseph met in the jail? Pharaoh's cupbearer! God had arranged for Pharaoh's cupbearer also to be jailed at the same time so that Joseph could meet him. That was *Step Two* in God's plan.

God's third step was to allow Pharaoh's cupbearer to forget about Joseph for two years. *"The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. It happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream.... Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh...(Gen.40:23; 41:1,9).*

That was the time, according to God's time-table, for Joseph to be released from prison.

Psalm 105:19, 20 says, "Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him. Then the king sent and released him and set him free."

Joseph was now 30 years old. God's time had come. And so God gave Pharaoh a dream. And God reminded the cupbearer also of Joseph as the interpreter of his dream. Thus Joseph came before Pharaoh and became the second ruler in Egypt. God's timing of events in Joseph's life couldn't have been more perfect!

We would never have thought of arranging things the way God did. If we had the power to plan Joseph's life, we would probably have prevented people from doing him any harm. But the way God did it was better.

It's a far greater miracle when the evil that people do to us is turned to fulfil God's purposes for us! God takes great delight in turning the tables on Satan, so that all things work together for the good of His elect.

Let's apply these events to our circumstances.

What should our attitude be to evil men, to brothers who are jealous of us, to women who accuse us falsely, to friends who promise to help us but forget, or to being thrown into jail unjustly?

Do we believe that God is sovereign enough to use all these people and everything they do - whether done deliberately or accidentally - to work together for the fulfillment of His purpose for our lives? If He did that for Joseph, won't He do it for us too? He certainly can and He will.

But I'll tell you who could have messed up God's plan for Joseph's life. Only *one* person - and that was *Joseph himself*. If he had yielded to Potiphar's wife's enticements, he would certainly have been set aside by God.

There is only one person in the universe who can spoil and frustrate God's plan for your life - and that is you yourself. No one else can do it. Not your friends and not your enemies. Not angels and not Satan. *Only you*. Once we see this, it will liberate us from a great many of our fears and from wrong attitudes towards those who harm us.

Let us look at one more example from the Old Testament, so that our minds are firmly established in this truth.

In the book of *Esther*, we read of how God rescued the Jews from being slaughtered as a race. But it is amazing to see how God did it - through one small incident - that the king could not sleep one night. Haman and his wife had been plotting one night to get the king's permission to hang Mordecai on a gallows the next morning, as a prelude to destroying all the Jews. But while Haman and his wife were making their wicked plans, God was working on behalf of Mordecai too. *"The Keeper of Israel never slumbers or sleeps."* (Psa. 121:4).

God prevented the king from sleeping that night. *"During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."* (Esth. 6:1). The king listened to his nation's history for many hours, until the day began to break. Then the reading came to the place where it was recorded that Mordecai had once saved the king from being assassinated. The king asked his servants what honour had been bestowed on Mordecai for this, and they replied that nothing had been done.

God's timing of events was again perfect. At that very moment Haman walked in, planning to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai. Before Haman could open his mouth, the king asked Haman what he thought could be done for one whom the king desired to honour. Haman, conceited man that he was, thought that the king was referring to him, and so suggested a great parade of honour for such a man. *"Go and do that for Mordecai, quickly,"* the king said.

How wonderfully our God can turn the tables on Satan. Haman finally hung on the very same gallows that he had made for Mordecai. As the Bible says, *"He who digs a pit (for another) will fall into it (himself). And he who rolls a stone (at another) will find the stone rolling back (to crush him)"* (Prov. 26:27).

Haman, in this story, is a type of Satan who is always planning some evil against us. God won't stop him, because God has a far better plan. He wants to turn the tables on Satan. The pit that the Devil digs for us will be the one that he himself falls into finally.

Zephaniah 3:17 says (in one translation) that *"God is silently planning for us in love"*, all the time.

While Mordecai was sleeping peacefully that night, quite ignorant of all the wicked plans that Haman and his wife were making against him, God was also planning to protect Mordecai. So Mordecai could have slept just as peacefully, even if he had known of Haman's wicked plans. Why not? If God was on his side, who could be against him?

Peter too could sleep peacefully in prison, the night before he was to be executed by Herod, knowing that

God was silently planning for him in love. At the right time, God's angel came and woke up Peter and set him free (*Acts chapter 12*).

We too can sleep peacefully each night, irrespective of what people or demons may be trying to do to us - if we believe in the total sovereignty of God over everything and everyone.

Once we have seen the sovereignty of God, we will stop blaming people for anything. We'll no longer be afraid of Satan, fearing that he might harm us in some way. We won't be afraid of sickness or disease or anything else in this world.

The Bible tells us to give thanks for *everything*, in *all circumstances* and also for *all people*.

"Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus to God, even the Father" (Eph. 5:20).

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:18).

"First of all then I urge that thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men " (1 Tim. 2:1).

We can do this meaningfully, only when we have seen the absolute sovereignty of God.

God cares for us as He cared for Jesus. The same grace that helped Jesus, the same power of the Holy Spirit that enabled Him to overcome, is now available to us.

Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied Him, His disciples forsook Him, the multitude turned against Him, He was unjustly tried, falsely accused and led out to be crucified. And yet on the way to Calvary, He could turn to the multitude and say, *"Stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk. 23:28).*

There was not a trace of self-pity in Him.

He knew that the cup that He was drinking had been sent by His Father. Judas Iscariot was only the messenger who had brought the cup. And so He could look at Judas with love and call him *"Friend."* You won't be able to do that, unless you have faith in the total sovereignty of God.

Jesus told Pilate, *"You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (Jn. 19:11).*

It was this assurance that enabled Jesus to walk through this world as a king, with dignity. He lived with that spiritual dignity and died with that same spiritual dignity.

Now we are called to *"walk as Jesus walked."* As He *"testified a good confession"* before Pilate, we too are to make our confession before an unbelieving generation.

Paul tells Timothy in *1 Timothy 6:13,14* *"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

As we have already seen, the ultimate good that God is working towards is to make us partakers of His nature, of His holiness. In His marvelous sovereignty, He makes use of everyone who crosses our path, to fulfil His purpose. That's why we can give thanks for ALL men.

Why does God allow that troublesome neighbour, that nagging relative and that tyrannical boss to keep harassing you? He can easily remove them elsewhere or even take away their lives, and thus make life more comfortable for you. But He doesn't do any such thing. Why? Because He wants to use them to sanctify you. He may even want to save them - through you.

Praise God that our victory is never dependent on the type of people we are surrounded by - whether in our home or office or anywhere else. Our victory is entirely dependent on God's grace. And that grace can be ours in every situation, if we humble ourselves.

CHAPTER TEN

FAITH IN GOD - OR FAITH IN MONEY?

Money is the great power in this world. That's why Jesus said that there were only two masters seeking for our devotion - God and Mammon.

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Lk.16:13).

The world believes in the power of money and says, *"Money can do anything."* We, as believers say, *"God can do anything."* But in most cases, those unbelievers have more faith in their god (money) than we have in the true and living God.

Since we are dealing with money matters everyday in this world, we need to get the victory in this area too.

The world believes that money can do wonders. What about us? Can't our God do greater wonders than money can? But God can't work on our behalf if we don't have faith. Jesus said that there were **two** persons in the universe to whom nothing was impossible. One is God. The other is the believer who has faith.

"All things are possible with God.....All things are possible to him who believes" (Mk.10:27; 9:23).

Nothing is impossible - *for God and for the person with faith.*

This is fantastic. But such is the power of faith - it connects us to the almighty power of God. With such faith, we are to demonstrate to the world around us that our God is greater than money.

I remember the time when we had to get a permit from the Government for purchasing cement for the construction of our meeting-hall in Bangalore. I went and saw the concerned clerk in the government-office and he told me to come back the next week. I went back the next week and he told me to come back later. This went on for sometime, until someone who was wiser to the ways of government-offices told me that what the clerk was asking for, indirectly, was a bribe!

There was no question of giving a bribe. We prayed instead. I kept going back again and again to the office and acquired a lot of patience thereby! Finally, after some months, we got our permit. I had applied only for cement. But I got patience as well! God always give us more than we ask for!! Hallelujah!!

How wonderful that God could use a corrupt official to enable me to partake of the Divine nature - patience! If I had given that man a bribe, I would have got the cement earlier. But I wouldn't have got any patience. Such is God's way. If we honour Him, He will honour us.

"Those who honour Me I will honour", says the Lord (1 Sam.2:30).

If we have no ambitions in our life outside of the will of God, we will never have any problems.

As far as we were concerned in the church at Bangalore, at that time, we wanted the cement, only if God wanted us to have it. We didn't want a meeting-hall if God didn't want us to have one. Neither did we want the hall before God's time. And so, if the permit for cement took four years to come, we were quite prepared to wait. God's timetable is always perfect. He is always on time - and never late. The date that God had determined for us to get the cement would be the date that we would get it. No power on earth could stop us from getting it according to God's timetable. So, if we are prepared to wait for God's time, we will find that He deals with all the officials involved, in His own way - and in His own time.

Through impatience, Saul lost the kingdom. Read this: *"He (Saul) waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering. And it came about as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, that behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. But Samuel said, 'What have you done?' And Saul said, 'Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, "Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the Lord." So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.'"* (1 Sam.13:8-14).

Through impatience, many have missed God's best. No-one can hinder God's plan for your life, if you take a stand for truth and righteousness, and are willing to wait for God's time.

"Through faith and patience, we inherit the promises" (Heb.6:12).

The same principle applies in the matter of finances for our home-needs. Our faith is in God - not in money. If you run your home according to the principles of God's kingdom, you will always have enough money for your needs. You may never become rich, but you certainly won't have to beg. David said, *"I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread"* (Psa.37:25).

Jesus said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these (material) things shall be added to you."* (Mt.6:33).

Many Christian *"full-time workers"* who started out in faith, have ended up as *dignified beggars*, having to send out monthly *"prayer-letters"* (which is often just another name for *"begging-letters"*) that hint cleverly about their financial needs.

Why do you have to hint about your needs to men, if you really have a loving and almighty Father in heaven? If God can't be depended on for a such a small thing as our monthly needs, then we might as well stop serving Him altogether! It is in such situations that both God and Mammon claim our loyalty. Whom are we going to trust in?

If our interests are the same as God's we will have no problem whatsoever. If we have no desire to buy or possess anything that God doesn't want us to have, we can always be at rest - for God will always supply our needs - if need be, miraculously. But if we yield to the desire to buy many unnecessary things to satisfy our material lusts, then we shall run into problems all the time.

The same principle of faith applies in the matter of finding a life-partner: *"A father can give his sons homes and riches, but only the Lord can give them understanding wives "* (Prov. 19:14-Living Bible).

If God has planned some person to be your life-partner, is there any danger of someone else marrying him/her? Not if you believe in the sovereignty of God?

You don't have to be impatient then, and you don't have to grab. God is well able to keep that person for you. You can afford to be at rest.

Adam did not have to run frantically around the garden of Eden looking for someone to marry! He wouldn't have found anyone, even if he did! What did God do? He put Adam to sleep. And it was when Adam was at rest that God prepared his wife for him. Then God woke him up and gave him Eve.

God loves you as much as He loved Adam and He will certainly lead you to the right person too, if He has planned marriage for you. *But you must trust Him.* Waiting, *without* faith will only lead to disappointment.

If you have no ambitions outside the will of God, if you are willing even to be single, if that be the will of God, then you need have no fear at all.

"The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His". (2 Chron. 16:9). What a wonderful God we have!

"This is the victory that overcomes the world - even our faith" (1 Jn.5:4). If you have faith - in God's perfect wisdom, love and power - you will always overcome this world, and its prince and its powers (mammon, pleasure, honour, etc.) If however, you don't believe in God's sovereignty or in His love, you'll find yourself being dragged along with the children of Adam into a life of misery, ungodliness, compromise and frustration.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD HELPS THOSE WHO ARE WEAK

The world says that God helps those who help themselves. But the Bible says that God helps those who are *unable* to help themselves. He is the God of the weak and the helpless. He calls Himself the God of the widows, orphans and strangers.

Deuteronomy 10:17,18 says, *"The Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the ORPHAN and the WIDOW, and shows His love for the ALIEN by giving him food and clothing."* He doesn't call Himself the God of the rich and the mighty - because they have access to human and financial help. He is the God of the weak and the helpless, who have no access to human or financial help. God is on the side of the weak. That's why He has to make us weak before He can help us.

God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh to make him weak, so that Paul might know the power of God resting on his life always.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul says, *"Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me - to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."*

As long as you are depending on your wealth and your influential friends to see you through life comfortably, God will leave you to your own devices. He won't even answer your prayer for help - for He sees that your confidence is in the arm of flesh - your bank account and the influential men you know.

But if you could only come to the place of weakness - where you are no longer depending on human resources or people - then you would be the most blessed person on the face of the earth. For then, God Himself will be your support. It is blessed to be weak and helpless, for then we can trust in God for everything.

King Asa of Judah was a man whom God had helped more than once. Yet when he had a severe disease of the feet, he depended on his doctors, and not on the Lord, to heal him. We read these sad words about him that, *"in the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa died"* (2 Chron. 16:12, 13).

Because he was the king, Asa had enough money to pay for the best doctors in the land. But all his influence and his wealth could not heal him of his disease. How much better it would have been if he had trusted in the Lord!

There was nothing wrong in his being *treated* by the doctors. There was everything wrong in his *depending* on them.

It is best to be in the place where you have the Lord alone as your Helper. If you are one of those who desires God's best in life, you will find that God weans you away, again and again, from leaning on the arm of flesh. He will make you weak, so that you might lean only on Him.

Consider how God dealt with Elijah. When there was a famine in Israel, God fed Elijah through crows and a brook. *"The word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. And it shall be that you shall drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.'* So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook."*(1 Kings 17:4-6).*

Twice a day the crows brought him bread and meat and there was always enough water in the brook. This happened so regularly that Elijah was in danger of depending on the brook and the crows rather than on God. And so God decided to change the channel of supply. *"It happened after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land."*(1 Kings 17:7)

One morning, Elijah went down to the brook and found that it had dried up. God was teaching His servant to stop depending on crows and brooks. He Who could make a meat-eating crow to go against its own nature to provide meat for His servant, could well be trusted to provide an alternate means of supply now.

So God told Elijah to go to Zarephath. And there God was going to take care of His servant - not through a rich businessman, but through an old, helpless, poverty-stricken, non-Jewish widow. She was the last person in Zarephath whom we would have selected for such a task.

But God's ways are different from ours. He delights to use the least likely channel of supply, so that our faith might rest, not on the channel, but on God.

"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God."(1 Cor.1:27-29).

It will be a wonderful day in our life when the crows that have fed us for so long, stop coming. Then we can start trusting in God alone.

When the person who has promised to help you lets you down, don't complain against him. God must have stopped him from helping you, so that you can learn to lean on the living God.

God is a jealous God and He will not share His glory with another.

"I am the Lord...I will not give My glory to another." (Isa.42:8).

"Thou shalt have no other gods but Me" is a word that we need to hear again and again, for our flesh has a tendency towards idolatry - to lean upon human and financial resources. God wants us to be dependent on Him alone for all our needs. Then we can live in victory all the time.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE

The sum and substance of all that we have been saying thus far is that all of our salvation is *by grace* and *through faith*.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph.2:8).

We began our Christian life - receiving forgiveness of sins and the baptism in the Spirit - by grace, through faith. One day when Jesus Christ our Lord returns in glory, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. That too will be by grace and through faith.

So, the beginning and the end of our Christian life on earth are by grace and through faith. What we need to learn is that everything in between, is also to be received on the same principle. By grace, through faith, we can overcome everything evil, and fulfil our God-appointed task on earth.

God knows all the future. There is nothing that is going to happen to us tomorrow or next week or next year that can surprise God. He knows the end from the beginning. This should give us great comfort. For if God knows that you are going to be faced with a massive trial or temptation tomorrow or next week, He will certainly give you grace to cope with it.

The Lord told Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."*(2 Cor.12:9). His grace IS sufficient for every need.

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." (2 Cor.9:8).

Grace is available in abundance to help us in our time of need.

"Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." (Heb.4:16).

Whatever your need might be, God's grace is available to help you meet it. We are therefore invited to come *boldly* to the throne of grace to receive that grace.

We have been defeated in the past, because we have not received that grace. The story can be different in the future. If we humble ourselves and cry out for grace in our time of need, God will not disappoint us.

The Bible says that those who receive abundance of grace will reign in life through Jesus Christ.

"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more then those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Rom.5:17).

That was God's will for Adam - that he might have dominion and rule over everything. *Genesis 1:26* says, *"God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over all the earth.'"*

Adam's disobedience prevented that from being fulfilled in his life. But now God has raised up a new race on earth - the sons of God who live by faith in Jesus Christ - who are to live with the dignity of kings, and reign on earth.

No sin need any longer have dominion over you, if you will humble yourself and receive God's grace.

No fear or anxiety need ever again enter your heart.

No one on earth can make life miserable for you any more - not your boss, not your neighbour, not your relatives, not your enemies, not Satan, no one - for you have learnt the secrets of victory.

Thanks be to God Who always leads us in His triumph in Christ.

How wonderful it is to live under God's new covenant of grace!

The promised land lies open before you!

Go in and possess it!

THE SECRETS OF VICTORY

(A Summary)

1. God wants to help you to live in victory at all times. Believe this with all your heart.
2. God gives you commandments because He loves you. Therefore take each of them seriously.
3. God loves the disciples of Jesus as much as He loves Jesus. Find your security in this love.
4. Every trial has a Divine purpose. God will never allow you to be tempted or tested beyond your ability. Believe this with all your heart.
5. Jesus was tempted in every point exactly as we are. Yet He never sinned. Look at Him as your Example, when you are tempted.
6. God gives grace only to the humble. So take up the cross and humble yourself at all times.
7. God will control all your circumstances so that they work together for your very best. Believe this with all your heart.
8. Depend on God alone as your unfailing Helper in all situations. Ask Him to wean you away from dependence on anything or anyone else.
9. God can give His power only to the weak. So allow Him to break you and to reduce you to a 'zero-point'.

APPENDIX 2

WHAT GOD DID FOR JESUS HE WILL DO FOR YOU

1. When bowed with burdens and with care,
Your soul is in despair;
You don't have to fear,
God is very near.
He loves you as He loved His Son
And He will help you too;
Just trust His word of promise
And He will see you through.

*This is the good news – what God can do;
What He's done for Jesus He'll do for you;*

*With mighty power He'll strengthen you;
There is no end to what God can do.*

2. Though sin and evil fill this world
And you are overcome;
Yet God's Word is true -
"Sin can't reign o'er you."
And when temptations' pull is strong
God's grace will be your stay;
So you can walk like Jesus
In vict'ry every day.

3. When pain and sickness come to you
And touch your loved ones too,
God knows how you feel -
He has power to heal.
Your Father will provide your need -
He's faithful and He's true;
And as He cared for Jesus
He will care for you.

4. O what a glorious comfort this -
If you have come to know
Jesus as your Lord
And Elder Brother too.
For all God has is now your own
And He won't let you go;
And now that God is for you
Who can be your foe? -

Zac Poonen

APPENDIX 3

WORDS OF WISDOM

1. If we keep the letter of the law but deny its spirit, we have a form of godliness without its power.
2. A humble person is thankful to *God* and to *man* for the smallest things.
3. If we are overcome by any sin, the root cause is pride somewhere or the other.

4. If we are truly humble, it is *impossible* not to receive grace from God.
5. A humble person can *never* be overcome by people, Satan or the flesh.
6. If we humble ourselves, we will be protected by God's almighty hand.
7. It is impossible for two people to become one, unless both are poor in spirit.
8. The poor in spirit are those who are conscious of their own need and who therefore judge themselves constantly.
9. To have revelation is to see things, people and circumstances etc., from God's point of view.
10. The beam in our eye is an unloving, judgemental attitude towards the brother who has a speck in his eye.
11. The Law gives us commands, but gives us *no ability* to keep them. Grace calls us to a higher level, but gives us *the power* to reach it.
12. Each day we have the opportunity either to do the will of God or to waste the day.
13. Obstacles in our way are not usually signals to retreat, but challenges to our faith.
14. He who walks after the flesh makes demands on others, but he who walks after the Spirit bears with their weaknesses and serves them.
15. He who is secure in the love of God will not judge or envy others or compete with them.
16. All glory that is not glory to God is empty glory.
17. If we live selfishly now, the memory of that life will cause us regret throughout eternity.
18. God allows us to be in need and to receive help from others, to teach us our mutual dependence in the Body of Christ.
19. When we give a gift to another, we must do so without robbing him of his dignity as a human being.
20. The real value of our life lies in what we have *given* and not in what we have *received*.
21. What we receive by Divine revelation is our *real* wealth. The rest is mere knowledge and is as worthless as counterfeit currency.
22. Faith can be based only on the word that we have heard from God. Man must live therefore by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.
23. God has to bring us to a zero-point before He can lift us up and fulfil His purpose through us.
24. We are called, not to *imitate* Christ, but to *follow* Him and to *partake* of His nature.
25. To fear God is to be faithful in our hidden life.
26. No-one other than we ourselves can spoil God's perfect plan for our life.
27. To be *faithful* in the use of money is a vastly higher thing than being just *righteous* in money matters.
28. True spirituality consists in denying our own will and doing the will of God.
29. To build on *sand* is to *understand* the doctrine and to be *excited* about it. To build on *rock* is to *obey*

the Word of God.

30. To be spiritual, one must give up not only what is *wrong* but also what is *unprofitable*.
31. To have spiritual gifts without Divine love is to be like an uninsulated electric wire, that brings death instead of light.
32. Jesus was crucified - not because He lived a holy life, but because He exposed religious harlotry. Let us follow His example.
33. No true prophet in the Bible ever came out of a Bible-school; only the false prophets did.
34. All our human abilities and earthly qualifications have no value at all in the sight of God.
35. The highest archangel became the Devil through pride in his *beauty*, his *wisdom* and his *position*. We must always beware of such pride.
36. The law is like an *ointment* that keeps our sores under control. Grace is like an *antibiotic* that kills the germs causing the sores.
37. The unmistakable mark of faith is praise and thanksgiving to God.
38. God gives us material things to be *used* - not to be *loved* or *possessed*.
39. True Christianity lies midway between asceticism and materialism.
40. We can *be* like Jesus only when He returns in glory, but we can *walk* as He walked even now.
41. Jesus grew in wisdom in his own *home* and in his place of *work* (carpentry-shop). We too can grow in wisdom in the same two places.
42. When we *accuse* the brothers, we become co-workers with Satan; when we *intercede* for them, we become co-workers with Jesus.
43. If we make ourselves a *necessity* to others, we hinder their walk with God.
44. Everything that does not originate *in love* will perish one day.
45. Our spiritual maturity is tested by our attitude towards those who do *not* see eye-to-eye with us.
46. To have a pure heart is to desire nothing and no-one but God.
47. If Jesus could not serve His Father without the anointing of the Spirit, neither can we.
48. A church without the gifts of the Spirit is like a paralyzed man - he may have life, but he cannot serve others effectively.
49. There are two persons for whom nothing is impossible - *God* and *the person with faith*.
50. If we die to ourselves, we can '*Rest in peace*' at all times and in all situations.

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