

Checkin' Out My Walk
#36 - Overcoming Promise To Ephesus

Context: Jesus is presented in Rev. 1: His eyes like a flame of fire;
His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace,

I KNOW YOUR WORKS - Our works are emphasized in Revelation 2 & 3.

Note: I believe each promise is to those who overcome the specific problem He points out in each letter. He gives a different solution for each problem.

There are different promises for each specific problem.

I believe the promises in Revelation 2 & 3 are millennial in scope. The blessings of His future Kingdom are assured to those who overcome. Note the progression of the promises.

1. Rev. 2:7 They will enjoy the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God.
2. Rev. 2:11 They will not be hurt by the second death.
3. Rev. 2:17a They will be fed out of the hidden manna.
4. Rev. 2:17b They will have a white stone with their name on it.
5. Rev. 2:26 They will be granted power over the nations.
6. Rev. 3:5a They will be clothed in white.
7. Rev. 3:5b Their names will be acknowledged by Christ.
8. Rev. 3:12a They will be "pillars" in the Lord's temple.
9. Rev. 3:12b Christ will write His own Name upon them.
10. Rev. 3:21 They will sit with Christ on His Throne.

Consider: The rewards to those who overcome graduate from church to church.

Rewards begin with the right to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God and escalate to the right to sit with Christ on His throne.

This seems to indicate a progression of spiritual growth and maturity.

Consider: Each individual is to hear what the Spirit says to all the churches.

The POWER to overcome each problem is provided to me as I abide in Jesus Christ.

Victory for overcoming is through Jesus Christ; not in our own strength.

Remember: Our sanctification (spiritual growth to maturity) is accomplished as we co-operate with God's operation in us. My sanctification is NOT automatic. It is a life-long process that entails a fight and a battle to be obedient, faithful, yielded and allow the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to work in us and through us.

Belief: Justified believers will be given positions in His coming Kingdom with regard to their spiritual maturity.

Ephesus:Problem: *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE.*

Solution: Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works,

Consequences: OR else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent. The grievance is so grave He threatens to remove their testimony.

Note: Living and working with truth alone leads to rigidity and legalism.

Love is the primary fruit of the Spirit.

Admonish: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Note: The promise is to the overcomer who is obedient and overcomes the particular problem Jesus has brought to light. He seems to speak of overcoming their coldness of heart and lack of love marked by leaving their first love and first works.

Promise: "To Him Who OVERCOMES I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Consider: 1. Gen. 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

2. The Tree Of Life First Appeared in Genesis 2:8-9. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. Gen. 2:15-17 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

God's Plan: Man is created in His image to have fellowship with God in Eden and to rule and dominion. The Tree of Life is present.

4. Gen. 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to Guard THE WAY To The Tree Of Life.

Note: Adam & Eve chose knowledge over life.

Believers in Ephesus chose knowledge over life. They were strong on doctrine, weeded out heresy and gate-keepers of truth, but they left their first love. They abandoned the love relationship with Jesus Christ which is the KEY to their spiritual growth & maturity.

Note: a. God does not want man to live forever in his sinful state.

b. His eternal life will be available to us when we are redeemed and born again.

c. Why does God place a cherubim (super angel) to guard the way to the Tree of Life?

If He were trying to keep Adam & Eve out, a regular angel would be sufficient.

He placed a cherubim because He is fighting a cherubim. Satan was the anointed cherub.

5. The tree of Life DISAPPEARED on the earth.

Result of Fall: Man sinned and was no longer in a position to rule and have dominion. He has been cast out of God's paradise and does not enjoy the fellowship he had with God before the fall. Gen. 5:3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image;

6. God's plan of redemption for fallen man > Jesus Christ paid our redemption.

By His death, burial and resurrection, He was victorious over Satan.

Consider: His purpose for born again believers NOW is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit + Word of God.

7. The tree of Life shows up again when Jesus Christ sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

The earth is refreshed like the Garden of Eden and He is physically with us.

His likeness that we lost; ability to rule & have dominion that we lost; being in the Paradise of God that we lost; His physical presence among us that we lost; the fellowship we lost >

Tree of Life shows up as those who overcome are in His image and in a position to rule and co-reign as joint heirs with Christ.

Consider:

1. The tree of life is literal. In Revelation 21:1-22:5, John is describing the eternal state which includes the new heaven and the new earth with the new Jerusalem, a literal place with some 25 verses devoted to its description. It is not a symbol.

2. Having a right to the tree of life is not equivalent to salvation, nor is it necessary for the maintenance of life. Why? Because possession of eternal life and the maintenance of eternal life comes from possession of Jesus Christ who is our eternal life.

All believers possess eternal life at the point of believing in Christ (John 3:16). Furthermore, eternal life, as God's gift to those who believe, is never maintained by what we do.

Compare I John 5:11-12; John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25, 26; 20:31; 17:3.

3. The tree of life, then, must offer some kind of superlative experience and blessing though the details are simply not explained to us.

Belief #1: Eternal life is free, a gift which comes solely by means of believing in Jesus Christ. This gift is "without cost" to the believer.

Throughout Revelation, eternal life is offered to the believer freely, without cost.

Rev. 7:14 These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:6 I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. (freely)

Belief #2: The rewards offered come to the one who overcomes. It costs him.

Rev. 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

Consider: This outcome costs and involves a life of discipleship.

My son = in the Greek > huios = mature son Note: We arrive at the state of full sonship (huioi = mature sons) by a life of obedience. All believers are children of God (tekna = children).

Notice: It seems the ones who have received the free gift without cost in verse 6 have in addition, persevered faithfully and overcome. They are the ones who will inherit.

Consider: John's major burden in Revelation is to challenge Christians to become overcomers by laying before their gaze the magnificent future they can inherit if they are faithful to the end. John repeatedly contrasts the faithful overcomer and the unfaithful Christian.

Rev. 22:12-14 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. ¹³ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Consider: BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, it seems to be conditional upon our works and obedience to His commandments.

Barnhouse: "Some have said that eating from the tree of life was the equivalent of receiving eternal life, but this is most evidently a false interpretation. Eternal life is a free gift to all who believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Eating of the tree of life is a reward that shall be given to the overcomer in addition to his salvation. His works, built upon the foundation that is Christ Jesus, abides the test of the Lord's appearing, and he receives over and above his entrance into eternal life."

Dillow: Phrase "Tree of Life" references in OT are in Proverbs. Fruit of the righteous is a tree of life in 11:30; a desire fulfilled in 13:12; a gentle tongue in 15:4; and wisdom in 3:18 > all are called a tree of life. These suggest a quality of life - rich fellowship with God. This fits well with the context in Revelation. Justification comes to all without cost, but the "tree of life" is presented as a conditionally earned and merited reward to those who overcome.

Fruchtenbaum: Eating with someone implies fellowship so the one who overcomes will fellowship with Him in His Kingdom. Those who do not eat are justified believers who have left their first love.

Nelson Study Bible: Eating of the tree of life is a promise of special intimacy with the Lord, a promise of renewing the fellowship enjoyed before the fall. The privileged access once denied Adam will be enjoyed by the one who overcomes.

Consider My Belief: I believe the admonition to Ephesus is the first step in our journey to spiritual maturity. If I do not repent and do the first works, I will not progress in my spiritual growth. Therefore, the remaining promises to those who overcome will not be for me. I will NOT lose my justification, but I will arrive at the Judgment Seat of Christ as the person in I Cor. 3:15: He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Because I failed to repent of departing from my first love and walked through life devoid of hearing my Shepherd's voice, I did not produce any spiritual maturity worthy of reward. I will have an entrance into heaven but I will forfeit so much.

The original Edenic mandate to "rule and have dominion" has yet to be fulfilled. We are to strive mightily to obtain the high honor of ruling with Jesus Christ. This is our inheritance, the future reward the writers of Scripture exhort us to pursue.

I Cor. 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.²⁵ And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown.*²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air.²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Phil 2:13 For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.

Heb. 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God's absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily *and* cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance *and* active persistence the race that is set before us,² [looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work].

Phil. 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained it [this goal of being Christlike] or have already been made perfect, but I actively press on so that I may take hold of that [perfection] for which Christ Jesus took hold of me *and* made me His own. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I Peter 1:5-11 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

II Cor. 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us spreads *and* makes evident everywhere the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him.