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The "Overcomer's" Pathway to the Throne

by T. Austin-Sparks

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We are now going to consider the pathway of the Overcomer to the Throne. We have seen that the last thing said in the Church age is "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne even as I overcame and am sat down with My Father in His Throne." Rev. 3:21. "And the 'man-child' was 'caught up to the Throne.'" Rev. 12.

Now the first step in this pathway has to do with the Blood, the Cross and the Will of God. That is primary. That comes before anything else because it was the first issue; it will be the ultimate issue — the will of God. Before ever we have to do with sin by the Blood and all the aspects and phases of the redemptive work of the Lord through His cross by His Blood; before ever the question of sin arose, the question of the will of God arose. That is where we begin. The sin question and all the redemptive work of Christ by His Blood in His Cross is subsequent to and consequent upon the violation of the will of God. Thus before ever we reach the stage of dealing with sin specifically by the Blood we have to get behind it and recognise that the foundation of it all is the Will of God. I want to be just as clear as possible so that we shall not get into a merely theoretical or theological realm, but remain very practical, and we want just to get before the eye of our heart what is in view. What is in view is the position of victory and power over the adversary and his hosts. That is what is before us here. Revelation 12 brings that clearly into view. The great issue, the all-inclusive issue of the ages for eternity is bound up with this, the reaching on the part of a company to a position of victory and power over the adversary and his hosts. Now that is not done mechanically, we do not reach that position automatically. It is not reached by our recognition of certain doctrinal truths, and adopting

certain attitudes and terms. I say that to try and clear the ground of misconceptions, because there are those, I fear, who think that if they take a certain attitude towards certain doctrinal propositions about victory and employ certain terms and phraseology, they are in the way of being Overcomers, and that they are in a place of authority over the enemy.

That is not the case. Many who have adopted such attitudes and employed such terms and phraseology have just been the playthings of the enemy, and he has made fun of their phraseology and their terms and their attitudes. It has not worked out. This thing is not realised in that way, beloved; we do not get power over the enemy and his hosts by terminology, phraseology, or by the acceptance of teaching about this thing, or even taking up attitudes. There may be a place for the truth, there is a place for doctrine, teaching, and there is a necessity for attitudes, but these are not sufficient, and we do not attain to the position in that way, but it is a matter of a certain spiritual inwrought work of the Holy Spirit; it is a matter of certain spiritual elements being in the very nature and constitution of the Overcomer. Something has to be put into their very constitution. It is spiritual, not technical.

What is the basic thing wrought into the constitution of the believer which makes him or her an Overcomer and brings him or her to the attainment of this power over the enemy and his hosts? What is it? The root of all is the will of God. The battle of the ages has ever had as its main issue the will of God. That little phrase, one of the commonest phrases amongst Christians, "Thy will be done" is the focal point of the battle of the ages; of all the forces of heaven and hell; they are concentrated upon the issues of that, "Thy will be done." The ages converge upon that, that is the issue between heaven and hell in the battle that has raged all the way through, and when you add the clause, "In earth as in heaven," you have set the stage, the place where that issue is settled. This earth becomes the stage upon which there is wrought out that issue of the will of God, and therein of course, is the explanation of the incarnation of God in Christ. Now we are able to gather that up into several concrete factors which we have to recognise. One is this: the fact of the presence of a will which is not subject to God's will, and *that* in us.

Now you all agree to that and accept that. It is almost commonplace, it does not need a great deal of emphasis, it would in certain realms, but not with us. The man who does not believe in "the fall" would not accept that, but here I think we can take it for granted that we universally agree that there is a will in us which is not subject to the will of God, by nature. We are all too frequently made alive to that fact. But why does one say such an obvious thing here? Because you and I often forget it, and we are surprised when we come up against it, and are very disconcerted sometimes because of it. We find even these consecrated lives, these lives which we have declared as wholly the Lord's, ourselves as being all for God, about which we would unhesitatingly say we have no wish whatever but that the Lord should have all His way in us, even we from time to time have the most terrific conflicts, and all because of that other will. The surprise to us of the thing! We who thought we were all for the Lord are surprised from time to time that we have a bad time because things do not go just as we thought they ought to go, as we wanted them to go, as we prayed they should go, for the Lord's interests; ostensibly for the Lord's interests. As far as we knew our own hearts, we believed in our absolute sincerity that it was for the Lord, and yet we have bad times in that realm. Now we have got to settle it beloved, that there remains another will in the flesh which is not God's will, in nature, and which is not subject to the will of God in itself. There is another will, there is the will of the flesh, there is the will of nature, and I do not understand any of the teaching of God's Word about progressive sanctification unless I admit of that.

The next thing we have to recognise is the dealings with us by God to bring us to be governed inwardly by the Divine will; and then the third thing is that the Lord Jesus has perfected the will of God in Himself once for all, and has given the Holy Spirit to them that believe, to inenergise toward that position in us. That is, of course, the positive side, which is the most encouraging. "It is God Who worketh (energiseth) in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13.

The Will of God Deeper than Doctrines, Phraseology, or Attitudes

Let us go over that ground a little more carefully. The first, the presence of another will in this universe and in us by nature. Now beloved, this is not merely a mental or conscious attitude. I suppose there is not one of us who would not say, if we were asked, that we were wholly devoted to the will of God, that we wholly wanted the will of God, that we were wholly on the side of God's will. As to attitude and present consciousness we stand — we should say we stand — in the will of God and for the will of God. Our strongest affirmations are of that character. And yet the strange thing is that, while in all sincerity we may affirm our position in this matter, we may at the same time be full of prejudices, preferences, personal interests, strong-minded, holding or seeking to hold things to our own liking or desire. We may be gripped and held imprisoned by traditional systems and common acceptances. This is not a matter of just our conscious attitude or our consciousness at all. The Will of God is a truth deeper than consciousness and deeper than our present attitude. We may take that attitude this moment in relation to what we call the Will of God, and in half an hour's time, or perhaps tomorrow we may be tested very severely on a point in the Divine Will and our attitude may change and we discover that it was not a question of attitude at all but something deeper; it was not a matter of our consciousness, it was deeper than that.

We never know how strong our will is until God puts us into situations where we behave as we never thought we should behave, where we betray ourselves because of the Lord's dealings with us. We have a controversy with the Lord, where the prevailing test of all is the will of God, where up to that time we have been saying, "Of course, all the will of God." Ah, but that was on the surface and we did not know what was involved, something deeper down; this other will would rise in our very nature, and in so far as that is true, we are in weakness and the enemy has got his ground, the ground to defeat us, the ground to hold power over us. And that is what I mean by this being a matter of something wrought into our constitution, not something we adopt as a mental attitude. And so we want the will of God, not something we believe about ourselves, not something which today — when things are not quite so difficult — we have as our consciousness towards God and His will, but something which is right beyond the reach of changing attitudes, something deep down. We have come to a place where it is so and changing conditions cannot shake that thing because it has been wrought into our constitution: the will of God wrought in us and becoming our nature. We have become partakers of the Divine nature. It is a matter of nature, beloved, not of attitude, not of temporary consciousness in acceptance of truth; it is a matter of nature, new nature. We must recognise that. Until that is done we have no power over the enemy.

You see what I mean by taking up attitudes towards the enemy on the basis of doctrine and thinking we have ascendancy. It does not work. It is this Overcomer company being put to the test through the fire and having the will of God wrought into their very constitution. On that basis we are overcomers. You see where it comes in in Revelation 12. It comes in in the blood. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." What does that mean? Why "He poured out His soul unto death." When? How? "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine." "The hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified... except a corn of wheat

fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit... He that loveth his life shall lose it." Do you see in the pouring out of His blood, His soul life in the blood unto death, it was His utter acceptance of the Divine will and that blood poured out registers the triumph of God's will, and that blood has been taken by Him into the presence of God as a testimony to a will perfected. Now "they loved not their souls unto death." The "word of their testimony" led them far on the ground of His blood. The principles are all patent; that the overcomers — though not with the same universal redemptive effect but with the same issue over the enemy — the overcomers come along the line of the will of God as perfected in Jesus Christ. The blood represents God's will perfected in the first and supreme Overcomer, the Lord Jesus, and by the word of our testimony we stand on the ground of that blood testifying to the blood which has overcome the other will in the will of God. That is the word of our testimony; not doctrine, but the thing wrought in experience.

"They loved not their souls." The doctrine is made good, the testimony is established through the trial, and an erect dragon standing to swallow us up is a good enough test as to whether we will stand for the will of God or not. This is a very practical thing. It goes deeper than attitudes, doctrine, consciousness; it is something wrought into us that makes us Overcomers, and that something is the will of God becoming constituted in our very make-up so that gradually we emerge from battles over the will of God and come to the place — not of passive resignedness — but of positive standing for God's will. There the power of the strong fleshly will is broken, which is the Satanic will which has been put into our very nature by the sin of Adam.

The Will of God Wrought in us Through Suffering

The second thing; God's practical dealings with us to bring us to be governed inwardly by that will. This is the explanation of all our temptations, all our trials, the seeming contradictions that come even from the Lord Himself. I say "seeming contradictions." Very often we find ourselves in a position where it looks as though even the Lord contradicts Himself. The Abraham trials. God promised a son, and then said that in that son — which it has taken a miracle to bring into being — everything in the Divine promise and covenant was bound up. Then the Lord said go and slay him and offer him a burnt offering — a burnt offering, there is nothing left. The Lord seems to be turning round on Himself sometimes and contradicting Himself. The seeming contradictions, the Divine delays, the disappointments, the set-backs; all these things find out our will. These are not the ordinary common-place experiences. I am talking about the spiritual experiences of the Lord's children who are, so far as they understand their own hearts, sincerely devoted to the will of God, and yet we all are passed through this course of testing where we come up against severe temptations and trials, contradictions, delays, disappointments, set-backs, and all this sort of thing, and they find us out.

The Lord knows us better than we know ourselves, and "the heart is deceitful above all things." The Lord knows we may be sincere in our own eyes, but He knows just how much *we* would like that, how much *that* is a secret appeal to what we would like, we would take; how there is that to which we would not open our eyes wide, we keep them half closed and say if only that comes about how delightful! There is something after all that *we* would wish, that *we* would desire; just that half or three parts element of self gratification. We would not admit it, we hardly recognise it, and yet we find our own soul responds to it. Beloved, you may say this is analysing very closely and making things difficult, but we have to get right down to the truth of things. There is something there which weakens the ground for God, and it is a tremendous triumph over the enemy when a child of God can come to the place where the greatest hopes and most cherished desires and ambitions are

handed up to the Lord and are as dead in the acceptance of what the Lord may desire. If there is any personal, fleshly — I do not mean gross, I mean natural fleshly — ambition preference, like, will, in any direction, if there is that, you may settle it once and for all that that is the ground of confusion. You will not get clear guidance from the Lord if there is mixture of the will of God with the will of the flesh. The Lord cannot guide us clearly if we have personal desire in the matter; if we have a little bit of personal strength moving; if our soul comes in, whether it be the reasoning or affectional soul or the volitional soul, the choosing soul; it is *our* soul-life. If that comes in one little bit we have no ground of clear guidance from the Lord. We have to stand back and say, not as I desire, will, or think, but absolutely as God wills. We have to get to the place where, by the grace of God, we can truly occupy the position that it does not matter to us personally so long as the Lord gets what He is after. Believe me, beloved, then you have provided a ground for clear guidance; but if there is strength of soul life as such getting into any question or issue, it brings about confusion and we shall simply get contrary guidances and not a clear way with the Lord. It is a ground of weakness, we cannot stand up, we cannot meet the situation, we are weak, and therefore it is the ground of defeat, a ground of the power of Satan.

The Ground of Satan's Strength

Satan's power is maintained not merely by what he is in himself but by the ground that he has in man, he must have a ground, a judicial ground of his own somewhere, upon which to operate. The Lord Jesus was able to overcome because He could say "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." We are defeated on that ground, our defeat takes place on the ground of our own strong will. Yes, often that which we colour and dress up as being desired for the Lord. We never know whether our protestations that it is for the Lord are really genuine until submitted to a severe test. We have said, "All the Lord's will in that," and the Lord has put us in something pretty hot, and we come back and say "this is exacting more than I thought it would, this is finding me out: I was a bit rash...." You invoke the challenge of God when you take that position. You see, the Overcomer must come to the position where there is wrought into him or her this will of God as a part of their constitution through testing, trials, adversities; where they come to the place where nothing is worth while but the will of God. It is a great thing to find yourself eventually experimentally and positionally where you once were doctrinally, and sometimes it is a long and trying and terrible journey from where we say, "Yes, all the will of God," until you get there. We are not there by saying it, we are there by a thing wrought in us. There must then finally be a letting-go to the Lord. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, because there is that of this creation which must be cast off. The motive may be good, the sincerity may be all right, but there are personal things bound up with it: desires, ambitions, things which would give us much pleasure. There is this secret mixture of ourselves, and although the Lord is going to save something — there is something very precious for Himself — He has to put the whole thing down into death that in death it shall be stripped of every bit of personal, natural soul interest and raise in resurrection a thing which is wholly of Himself — and then you get the enlargement — the Son of Man glorified.

I will close, reminding you of the third thing. While we stand face to face with the severity of this thing (it is a tremendous thing when you are coming through it and having the will of God wrought into you and all things are being brought to death) it is blessed to remember that the will of God has already been perfected in Christ and He has in Himself secured our perfection in the will of God. Read again Hebrews 10:10 "By which will we have been sanctified..." Perfected forever by the will of God done in Christ. "I come to do Thy will, O God." "By which will we have been sanctified." He has done it, He has secured it, and He has secured our perfection in God in Himself and now, on the

ground that something has been done, a living, standing reality, a fact to which nothing can be added, He has sent the Holy Spirit to enter into us who receive Him, to be in us the inenergising power of the will of God. God the Holy Spirit working, energising in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is a blessed thing to get linked up with something that is done. Not a doctrine but a living Person, by a mighty power, the Holy Spirit, God Himself working in towards something He has achieved. It is not enough to take hold of that as doctrine. We have to take hold in a practical way. On the one hand, let go to the Lord, and on the other hand reach out strongly and take hold of the energies of the Lord that there shall be a fulfillment in us of the words "It is God Who worketh in you to will and to do..." In the hour when we are challenged, when after all the will of God is not so easy to accept, when we are passing through the test and when we are in our Gethsemane, when the cup is offered to us — then, what is it to be? "O fulfill that word in Philip. 2:13, 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'" Unless He does it we will not go through, but by that inenergising of God, "strengthened with might by His Spirit into the inner man" we shall become Overcomers, we shall come to the place where Satan is robbed of his ground of power in us because the will of God perfectly done is now a part of our being, we have approximated to that experimentally. I leave these closing words of the Hebrew letter with you, "The God of peace Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in everything to do His will, energising in you that which is well pleasing in His sight."