

# How to Be an OVERCOMER

WHY are we not more successful in living up to God's standard? WHY do we slip and fall occasionally? Here is how YOU can overcome where you are weakest and hardest tempted!!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

**D**O YOU have some "besetting sin" — some point of weakness, perhaps secret, you have been unable to overcome?

Have *you* ever met temptation, struggled with it, only to wake up a little later to the remorseful fact that you had slipped, and failed to overcome?

Or perhaps you are struggling with some habit that holds you as its slave — struggling, wrestling, always fighting it, yet somehow never able to conquer it.

## Only the Overcomers

These things are serious. We *must* overcome these sins, these habits, these sudden temptations — be cleansed of them thoroughly — if we expect to get through to the Kingdom and inherit eternal life.

"To him that OVERCOMETH" says Jesus, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21).

"He that OVERCOMETH, and keepeth my works unto the end, to HIM will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27).

Not all are even called, now. Many, though they may have *heard* the true message, have never received a conscious convicting KNOWLEDGE of the truth. This is not the time when God is calling them.

But God is now calling SOME to a life of separation — to a new and different and Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life — in order that they may be wholly CLEANSED of sin, and that they may GROW in grace and knowledge, thus being prepared, trained, fitted for a position of solemn responsibility — that of king or priest — in God's KINGDOM! And it is *only* those who qualify by the training, the overcoming, the spiritual development and growth, DUR-

ING THIS PRESENT LIFE, who shall thus reign with Christ. Study the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:11-27.

So the Christian life is a new and a different life — an OVERCOMING life. Sin must be torn out, root and branch. We must be made righteous, holy.

## Why We Stumble and Fall

Why, then, do so many of us continually stumble and fall? Yes, even those who do strive, struggle, and even PRAY and PRAY for help, for victory, over some vicious habit? WHY?

First, notice a portion of Paul's instruction to the Philippian.

"And be found in him, not having mine OWN righteousness, which is of the law, but *that which is through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness WHICH IS OF GOD *by faith*" (Phil. 3:9).

Notice, it is not OUR righteousness, but GOD'S.

David was inspired to write: "All thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). Yes, and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10).

## The Kind of Love Required

Right here is one trouble. Too many Commandment-keepers are struggling along, trying to keep the Commandments in their own power and strength — thinking it is THEIR own personal human love that fulfills the Law!

Too many "Commandment-keepers" have only been converted to the ARGUMENT of keeping God's Commandments, and have never really EXPERIENCED definite repentance — for a real conversion is a DEFINITE EXPERIENCE! Such people need to go to a private place, alone with God, and get to their knees, and pour out their hearts to God, and stay with it until they really KNOW they have really repented.

No wonder so many become dis-

couraged, and feel like giving up!

We do not even HAVE the kind of love that fulfills God's law and makes us righteous! LOVE is of God, for God IS love! And it takes "the love of God... shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5), to fulfill the law and give us GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The law is SPIRITUAL (Rom. 7:14). We are carnal. It takes a SPIRITUAL love to fulfill a spiritual law. The Holy Spirit within us is merely GOD'S LAW IN ACTION! And since God alone can supply the LOVE that makes us righteous, it becomes GOD'S righteousness, not ours.

## How to Get Faith

But how do we receive the LOVE? Note again the scripture quoted above: "... the righteousness which is of God BY FAITH."

It comes, then, by FAITH. Now most people seem to believe that the FAITH, by which we must receive everything God gives us, is something that we, ourselves, must work up and supply, by some kind of hard effort. And it does become *such an effort*, doesn't it, trying to strive to have FAITH?

Foolish babes in Christ! Can't we see that if WE were able to supply the faith which brings all else, that we, ourselves, would earn our own salvation by WORKS? It would be the kind of righteousness that is only FILTHY RAGS to God!

Stop trying to work up faith. You have no faith. The scripture above speaks only of "THE FAITH OF CHRIST"! Not *your* faith — CHRIST'S faith. Jesus had REAL FAITH! He performed miracles! And He rose from the dead — and HE LIVES.

Here is the secret! He gives — He imparts — His strong faith to you and

to me! Yes, even FAITH is a gift of God — one of the spiritual GIFTS (Eph. 2:8 and I Cor. 12:9).

Then how shall we go about getting more of it? By yielding, submitting our desires, our purposes, our wills, to HIM, by ASKING Him in real earnest persevering prayer, and by trusting Him to give it! *From commitment, then the trust will follow with effort*

### Why We Have Not Been Delivered

God's Word promises: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; *but will with the temptation also MAKE A WAY OF ESCAPE*, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

But has it not often seemed, in your experience, that God has failed to keep this promise? Temptation has come. You have struggled, even prayed, yet you were overpowered, and you did not find the way of escape! What is wrong?

Jesus said, "I will NEVER leave you nor forsake you." "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." God's Word promises, "Sin shall NOT have dominion over you." Yet have you not found that sin has had DOMINION over you, holding you its slave? Have you not fought it desperately, even with tears streaming down your face — only to fail?

### How to Apply and Use Faith

WHY? What is wrong? Simply that we have not known how to receive, apply, and use the FAITH God promises to give!

First, there is something WE must do. Some go to one extreme and try to do it all. Others swing to the opposite extreme, plead with God, make little effort themselves, and expect Him to do it all.

James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Submit! Resist! This takes effort.

Peter says to humble ourselves, casting ALL our care upon the Lord, and to be sober and VIGILANT, because the devil is walking about, watching for the chance to tempt us when we are off our guard: "whom RESIST steadfast in the

faith" (I Peter 5:6-9). We are to resist Satan, and do it in the faith of Christ — but HOW?

The key to it all is "BE VIGILANT." Be on your guard! Be ever watchful! Be prepared! That's where we fall down! It takes constant, continuous, vigilant effort, never letting down!

Unless we, ourselves, had to put forth some effort we could not be OVERCOMERS! But if we had power to do it all, we should not need God! So it requires our effort — our continuous, watchful, ever VIGILANT effort — *empowered by GOD'S SPIRIT!*

James continues: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). Now we are getting closer to our answer! When temptation comes, we ARE TOO FAR FROM GOD — and we are then unable, SUDDENLY, on the spur of the moment to get close enough to Him to get the help and the deliverance we need!

It sometimes takes TIME to get CLOSE to God — into that intimate contact with Him so that we can draw on Him for the power we suddenly need!

In other words, when temptation unexpectedly has come, we have found ourselves caught off guard — out of prayer — out of contact with God — OUT OF SPIRITUAL TRAINING!

You were entering a CONTEST with Satan. You tried to wrestle with him, but you were OUT OF TRAINING, out of spiritual condition.

Suppose a prizefighter would suddenly find himself, untrained and unprepared, in the ring in a contest with the world's heavyweight champion! Do you think any living man could win? How much STRONGER is Satan, by comparison? No wonder we fail! Could such a fighter, who had been dissipating, carousing, weakening himself physically, SUDDENLY summon enough strength and skill to conquer the champion of the world? Could a mile runner run a successful race and win, unless he trained, and prepared himself carefully for the race — unless he were IN CONDITION when it came?

We can no more win these SPIRITUAL battles when out of SPIRITUAL training. All spiritual power and strength must come from God. We can drink it in from Him only when we are IN CON-

TACT with Him — close to Him — in communion with Him!

Otherwise, when the temptations suddenly assail you, no matter how hard you then try, or cry out to God for help, you are simply TOO FAR AWAY FROM HIM to get help!

Spiritual training, to get and KEEP in constant vigilant condition to meet the foe of temptation and sin, requires *continuous, earnest, persistent PRAYER!* That is why we are commanded to PRAY WITHOUT CEASING! TO KEEP IT UP!

If we draw nigh to God, and then KEEP close to Him, our problem will be solved. We will then have the FAITH. We will then be FILLED with His Spirit — His power to overcome.

We can keep in spiritual training only if we keep our affections — our minds — our thoughts — on SPIRITUAL things. Read Col. 3:1-10. Most of us keep our minds filled with earthly, material cares and interests, turning to the spiritual only occasionally! Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and His RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Sometimes it takes a siege of FASTING AND PRAYER — earnest, *determined, persevering prayer* — *seeking* God with all our might — with weeping — staying with it, DETERMINED, until we get through. Then we must keep in CONTINUOUS prayer. Cast ALL our cares upon HIM. We are not doing that. If we do, there will be many things each day to pray about! And it takes daily PRIVATE prayer, in real earnest, besides family prayer. Is eternal life WORTH IT?

### PERSONAL COUNSEL

If you are one who really wants to repent and obey God, here is *good news*. The Worldwide Church of God sends personal representatives (ordained ministers) into most communities of the United States and the British Commonwealth and many other parts of the world. These men are ready to counsel with you *personally* — to answer questions — to help you with any spiritual problems — and to baptize any who are ready for it.

So, if you would like one of our trained men to call and counsel with you, there is such a man near you. See the mailing addresses on page 4.

# HOW TO PREVENT SIN

by Herbert W. Armstrong

**D**O YOU realize that if it is wrong to *do* a certain thing, it is wrong to harbor THOUGHTS of that thing in your mind?

"All have sinned," says the Scripture. What *is* sin anyway?

Satan ought to know --- and he is the invisible influence who sways the course of this world. Hollywood is considered by many as the world's mecca of sin. The newsstands in Hollywood used to carry a very worldly booklet, written in a very light, "breezy," and satirical vein, titled "How to Sin in Hollywood." It gave a definition of sin. The definition is expressive, and not far from the truth. Here it is: "Sin is *thinking thoughts* you ought not to be thinking about things you ought not to be *doing* while you are *thinking* that kind of *thoughts*."

God's definition is: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4) --- the law of "LOVE," as defined by the Ten Commandments. Jesus said: "That which cometh *out* of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed *evil thoughts*, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness [all violations of the law --- the Ten Commandments] . . ." (Mark 7:20-22).

"ALL have sinned," says the Scripture. And what man, especially what Christian, is there who has not time and again experienced the struggle against sin described by the Apostle Paul? "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:15, 19). Who is there who has not LOST that struggle, perhaps many times?

Of course no man, of himself, can live above sin. "With men it *is* impossible," said Jesus, "but with God all things are possible." And Paul contin-

ues (Rom. 8:4, 14) to show that the only DELIVERANCE from this "body of death" is through Jesus Christ, and the indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit --- "that the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit . . . they are the sons of God."

Yes, but we have OUR part in it, too. And it all centers in the MIND.

REPENTANCE of sin means, literally, to *change* one's *mind* in respect to sin. If we repent, and are baptized accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour, the promise is we SHALL receive the gift of the Holy Spirit "and be renewed in the spirit of your *mind*" (Eph. 4:23). The presence of the Holy Spirit is the RENEWING of *the mind*.

How does sin actually happen? ". . . Every man is *tempted*, when he is drawn away of his own lust [desire], and enticed. Then when lust [the desire IN THE MIND] hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

The TEMPTATION is in the *mind*. When you *think* about the thing that tempts you --- let your mind dwell on it --- turn it over in your mind --- whether it be a desire to GO some place, to DO something, or to HAVE something you know is wrong --- that *thinking about it* finally conceives --- leads to *action* --- and breeds SIN. You finally DO the thing you kept thinking about, wanting to do. If you keep thinking about it, after a while you'll be UNABLE to resist it. That's why you've lost so many of these struggles against sin --- you kept *thinking* about it, desiring it, wanting it.

The way to prevent sin is to let God's Spirit fill the mind. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

The way to put a thing OUT of the mind is to put an *opposite* thought IN the mind. So often I have noticed parents of babies strive so hard to "shush" up the baby when it is crying. There's either something causing pain, which should be removed, or something in the baby's mind that is causing its crying or fretting. Just saying "shush!" or commanding the baby to stop fussing doesn't usually get very good results. We have reared four children, and long ago I learned the trick of quieting the baby by *getting its mind on something else*. Instead of commanding it to stop crying, attract its attention with some new object --- get it interested in playing with that object (I have often used my fountain pen with excellent results) --- and before you know it the child will forget all about its crying.

Try using this same method on yourself. But instead of material or worldly things, a mature person should use self-discipline and set his mind on spiritual things. Open your Bible. Put the study of some *spiritual* subject in your mind. Next time you are tempted, try it. Pray over it. Ask God to help you. See how rapidly you begin to win the victory over temptation and sin, and how marvelous will be your spiritual and CHARACTER growth. □

## ADDITIONAL READING

The Worldwide Church of God publishes many colorful, informative booklets on a wide range of biblical topics. Four are listed here: *What Is a Real Christian?*, *All About Water Baptism*, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*, *Where Is God's True Church Today?* Write for your *personal* copies of the above booklets. They are sent *free* as an educational service in the public interest. Worldwide mailing addresses are on page 4.

**MAILING ADDRESSES WORLDWIDE:**

IN THE UNITED STATES

*Plain Truth*  
P. O. Box 111  
Pasadena, California 91125

IN SOUTH AFRICA  
P. O. Box 1060  
Johannesburg 2000

IN AUSTRALIA  
P. O. Box 202  
Burleigh Heads,  
Queensland, Australia 4220

IN CANADA  
P. O. Box 44, Sta. A  
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2

IN THE PHILIPPINES  
P. O. Box 2603  
Manila, Philippines 2801

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM  
P. O. Box 111  
St. Albans, Herts.  
England

IN NEW ZEALAND  
P. O. Box 2709  
Auckland 1, New Zealand

THESE REPRINT ARTICLES ARE NOT TO BE SOLD. They are provided as a public service in the public interest by Ambassador College — made possible by the contributions of those who, voluntarily, have become co-workers in support of this worldwide work. Ambassador College, as a separate corporation, is associated with the Worldwide Church of God, and a portion of the financial needs of the work is supplied by that Church. The publishers have nothing to sell, and although contributions are gratefully welcomed, no solicitation is ever made to the public for financial support.