

church

THE CHURCH IN SINGAPORE

times

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1999 ISSUE NO.1

He who overcomes...

Revelation 2: 7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5-6, 12, 21-22

What does the Lord require of the churches today? In chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, He does not say "he who believes", but "he who overcomes". This shows it is not enough only to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve Him or preach the gospel. Here, the requirement is to overcome.

This call is not merely to overcome some sins, weaknesses or television programmes. Since Revelation is about the bride preparing for the Lord's coming, to overcome concerns the building up of the church, which is the mystery of this universe, for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose.

From history we see that many things that should not be in the church, which God hates and which are against His purpose, have crept into the church and changed her nature. Hence, we need to know God's word and understand His call to overcome.

RECOVER FIRST LOVE

From the letters to the seven churches, it seems the Lord is not very concerned about their outward works. The church in Ephesus had many works, yet she was rebuked for leaving her first love. The Lord treasures our first love. To prepare for His coming, the foremost prerequisite is the first love. In Greek, this means the best love. The Lord deserves our best love. This is His first words to the churches. The church is His bride. If she does not love her Bridegroom any more, the relationship has no value.

Moreover, the best works issue from the best love. Luke 21 relates an incident where the rich cast much into the treasury, but a poor widow cast in only two mites (Luke 21:1-2), yet the Lord praised the widow. He did not look at the amount, but the heart. "Those gave out of their surplus, but this one cast in all that she had." This is the best love.

Do we give the Lord our best love? Maybe when we were younger, we loved the Lord fervently and did not care about wealth, reputation, suffering or the world, but when we got married and have our careers, houses, cars and children, is our love for the Lord still burning? Are we still as pure?

We may still attend meetings and even bear more responsibilities, but when our love for the Lord gradually dies away, in God's eyes, we have fallen. We must repent and recover our first love. This is crucial for the preparation of the Lord's bride.

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No matter what changes occur around us, one thing is sure: the Lord is coming for His bride. Now is the time for the bride to make herself ready. In these last days when sins, lies, hypocrisy and temptations abound, we need to know our Bridegroom and His will, and have the desire to overcome all degradation by His strength and grace. In this issue, we bring you an abstract of the messages given at the Church Camp last December, of the Lord's clarion call for overcomers.

Also included are reports on the shepherds' conference and the baptism meeting as well as a sister's testimony of family salvation - all to the Lord's glory. And "Because He lives" He will succour and help us to overcome - may the story behind the writing of this hymn reminds us that whether in comfort or in trial, in joy or in pain, we live because Christ lives!

The editors

The Lord promises to give the overcomers to eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God. But if we do not repent, He warns that the lampstand would be removed. Let us tell the Lord, "We give You our best love, for You deserve such a love."

LOVE GOD'S WORD

The Lord says that if we love Him, we would keep His word (John 14:15). From His word, we know what He wants and what we should do. The more we love Him, the more we care for His word. We cannot lower God's standard, nor change the Bible. We must learn to follow His choice and His way, and keep His word.

HATE WHAT GOD HATES

God requires us to overcome the degradation of the churches, which includes the works and teachings of Balaam, Jezebel and the Nicolaitans. *Nico* means to conquer, or be above. *Laos* means the common people. The Nicolaitans ignore or replace the headship of Christ to rule over God's people. They wrongly teach that there should be hierarchy in the church, such as the papal, pastoral or class system.

Balaam is an Old Testament Gentile prophet who prophesied for gain. Any service with a motive to gain – money, reputation or recognition – is according to the principle of Balaam, which brings in corruption.

Jezebel "calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20).

The Lord hates these things, yet the churches in Pergamos and Thyatira tolerated them. Likewise, such is the case of the church today: we love what He hates and tolerate what He would not. How can we prepare the bride if we are not one with the heavenly Christ? The church needs to overcome this. Moreover, in our services, let us beware of the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, and learn to serve in love, not in competition, nor for any form of gain.

OVERCOME THE WORLD

The church in Pergamos dwelt where Satan's throne is – the world. The whole world lies under the sway of the evil one. Most Bible teachers agree that this refers to the time when the church was joined to the world and became worldly.

Before the era of Constantine the Great, the church was poor and persecuted. They did not even have a place to meet, so they met underground, in the catacombs. If we have been to places like Rome, we would know that this really needs grace – it is very cold inside the catacombs, just like in a cave. Despite being persecuted and poor, they really loved the Lord. But when Constantine recognised the Christian faith and welcomed Christians, the church became powerful and rich. Previously, they met in the catacombs, now they had huge cathedrals. But they lost their pure love for Christ, became worldly and brought in a lot of mixture. The Lord wants us to overcome these.

OVERCOME SUFFERINGS

The church in Smyrna was a church in suffering. Although we may not suffer physical persecutions like the saints in Smyrna, our temptations in this age of comfort are greater and more dangerous. We need to equip ourselves with the readiness to suffer. Not that we should afflict ourselves, but we should look to the Lord and be prepared to suffer some sacrifices in our lives. Some services in the church require us to suffer a little. For example, to some, getting up early or serving others is a suffering. To obey parents, to be wronged, or even to preach the gospel and pray for others can be a kind of

suffering. We must equip ourselves with a mind to suffer.

OVERCOME DEATH

The Lord says to the church in Sardis, "you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead ... I have not found your works perfect..." (Rev. 3:1–2).

To be living does not mean to have outward activities. To have life and be living has to do with our daily walk with the Lord. Christ is our life. If we do not live Him, we are not living, but are dead.

Our living is our works. If we examine ourselves, we would discover that because we are not absolute, many things we do and many of our services in the church are also not perfect. Therefore, we must draw near to the Lord. He is our all. With Him, we can be living and can complete what He has committed to us. The Lord says if we overcome, we would walk with Him in white.

OVERCOME LUKEWARMNESS

The church in Laodicea was neither hot nor cold; she was lukewarm. This is due to the lack of spiritual understanding. We may have a lot of doctrines, but we may not have seen the real thing, which is to touch the reality of Christ. The more we touch His reality, the more we would discover our lack, our blindness and wretchedness. But if we do not touch Christ and have only doctrines and knowledge, we would be puffed up.

We must realise that we are poor and blind by nature. Do not be presumptuous. Like Laodicea, we are nothing. Therefore the Lord says, "you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). He urges us to buy eye salve from Him, that we may see the real thing, and to buy gold that we may be rich in Him. He who has the real gold (God Himself) will not be proud for we must pay a price to obtain it. We also need to buy white garments, that our nakedness may not be exposed, and to repent.

In the book of Revelation, the Lord repeatedly declares that He is coming soon. The time is short. Let us rise up and take heed to His call! May the Lord strengthen us and help us to overcome!

Abstracted from the messages given at Church Camp 1998 and has not been reviewed by the speaker, brother John So.

Shepherds' Conference

– learning to bring up godly children

The goal of the conference (31 December 98 to 1 January 99) was for children's serving ones and parents to fellowship on bringing up godly children before the Lord. Hence, the theme was encapsulated in Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." More than 60 brothers and sisters came together for a time of prayer, earnest fellowship, teaching and learning.

At the three workshops, we learned about children's developmental stages and their implications on teaching children, how to tell Bible stories and to put a song in their hearts. These gave us some basic understanding of children's psychology, presentation and teaching skills.

We were exhorted by God's word to have a vision of the godly way our children should go, and to direct them onto the right path. The inspiring example of the godly lineage of Hudson Taylor – who devoted his entire life for the gospel in mainland China, and whose descendants are still following in his footsteps – also encouraged us to pray much for the children God has entrusted us. We give thanks to our beloved Lord for a wonderful time of fellowship and learning.

The Lord adds to the church

Praise the Lord, He has added more to the church! A total of 21 brothers and sisters were baptised in January – one on 9th, 19 on 23rd, and one on 24th. Most of them are family members of the saints, for whom much prayers and petitions have been made to the Lord.

The fruit of their labour testifies to God's faithfulness. What our God promises, His own hand fulfils. Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word remains forever. Oh, the God who keeps covenant and shows mercy, He is our God from generation to generation!



Brother Lee Kee Huat was baptised on 23 January.

"Because He lives"

"Because I live, you will also." [John 14:19b]

Gloria & William J Gaither

Often times when we are faced with something that is beyond us, we wish we could just get away from it all! Life is indeed not easy, but thank the Lord, because He lives, we will live also. Whatever tomorrow may bring, He is by our side to face it with us!

Such was the story of encouragement of the Gaithers, a talented and godly American couple whose ministry centres on writing, recording albums and distributing Christian music. The following is William Gaither's account of the circumstances that prompted the writing of the hymn "Because He lives", one that reflects their philosophy of life – "the resurrection principle in the daily routines of life".

"We wrote 'Because He lives' after a period of dry spell when we hadn't written any songs for a while. At the end of the 60s, when our country was going through some great turmoil – with the height of the drug culture and the whole 'God is dead' theory which was running wild, and also at the peak of the Vietnam War – our little son, Benjy, was born (at least Gloria was expecting him).

"At that time we thought, 'This is really a poor time to bring a child into the world!' We were even quite discouraged at times. And then Benjy did come. We had two little girls whom we love very much, but this was our first son, and so the lyric came to us, 'How sweet to hold our newborn baby and feel the pride and joy he gives, but still better the calm assurance that this child can face uncertain days because Christ lives.'

"This song gave us the courage to hold our heads high and say, 'Because Christ lives we can face tomorrow', and hopefully that could be of help to other people. Many have told us they have used this song at the funerals of their loved ones, at a time when they were very discouraged, and it has been very encouraging to them."

May the Lord continue to bless this hymn that through it more would find the strength to live because He lives.

Story from 101 More Hymn Stories by Kenneth W Osbeck, Kregel Publications.

Experiencing The Lord In My PSLE

Sometimes, a deeper experience of the Lord comes during crucial periods of our lives. And prayer seems to be the only float in such rough waters.

A week before my PSLE, I had to do two to three sets of past years' examination papers every day, but that was really nothing compared to the time I had wasted.

As it turned out, the examinations were not as bad as I had imagined, except for a couple of tough questions. But I realised that although I prayed, my heart was wrong. I wasn't desperate for God, I just prayed out of habit. When I heard some of my classmates discussing answers after the papers, I began to feel fearful and worried. This time, I really prayed with all my heart. I sought the Lord sincerely and had fellowship with Him every night. Praying wasn't a chore any more, it was more of a desperate cry for help.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt 7:7). This verse kept me going throughout the examinations. Through this experience, I learnt that prayer is not just asking God for things, but more importantly, to seek Him wholeheartedly.

Bro Huang Shukai



Trust and Obey

Last year – 1998 – was a year in which I felt really troubled. Having stopped going to the students' meeting for some time due to school commitment, I found it hard to go back even when I eventually had the time.

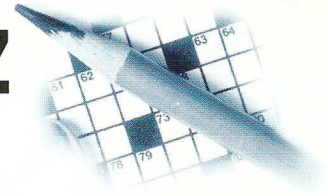
Not long later, the 'A' levels examinations were just round the corner. I felt lost, and God seemed so foreign and far away. Just then, a brother shared with me how Abraham trusted God and willingly offered up his beloved son Isaac. He added that we also should offer up our own "Isaac" – that which is most precious to us.

Having heard that, I felt a strong sense of guilt within me for being so far away from God. Only then did I realise that I had been clinging on to my "Isaac". I decided to turn back to God absolutely – there would be no half-heartedness as in the past. I told the Lord, "I want to really turn back to You, to spend time to know and experience You. I trust in You to lead me through all trials and temptations."

Finally, my examinations ended. I called the Central Manpower Base to ask about my enlistment into the army. When I heard that it would be on 31 March, I was quite surprised. However, I realised later that this late enlistment date is God's gift for me to have more time to know and experience Him. I realise now how important it is to trust Him if we want to walk with Him.

Bro Teab Kwok Wui

QUIZ



INFAMOUS CHARACTERS IN BIBLE

Do You Know Who They Are ?

- 1 Who was the governor who released Barabbas, instead of Jesus, to the crowd?
- 2 Who was the king who commanded all male children from 2 years old and under, in Bethlehem and all its districts, to be put to death?
- 3 Who were the ones who requested King Herod to behead John the Baptist?
- 4 Who lied to the apostles concerning the proceeds from the sale of their possessions and died as a consequence of their lie?
- 5 Who turned back to look at Sodom and was consequently turned into a pillar of salt?
- 6 Who plotted the death of Naboth in order to obtain a vineyard for her husband?
- 7 Who cursed King David at Bahurim and was eventually killed by David's son (Solomon)?
- 8 Who prophesied for profit?
- 9 What is the name of David's wife who despised his "leaping and whirling" before the Lord?
- 10 Who deceived and changed Jacob's wages 10 times?
- 11 Who was the Philistine woman who betrayed Samson by revealing how he would be made weak?
- 12 Who raped his half-sister (Tamar) and was killed by his half-brother (Absalom) in vengeance?
- 13 Who is the first king who took Jerusalem captive?
- 14 Who tried to seduce Joseph and caused him to be imprisoned when her advances were rejected?
- 15 Who was the king who forbade the Israelites to sacrifice to God in the wilderness?
- 16 Who killed Absalom, an act of disobedience to King David's command?
- 17 Who influenced King Ahasuerus to issue a decree to destroy all the Jews throughout his entire kingdom?
- 18 Who offered the apostles money in exchange for power to impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands?
- 19 Who made 2 calves of gold as gods for the Israelites (thus leading them into sin) when he feared that the Israelites would kill him and return to Rehoboam, King of Judah?
- 20 Who were the two who offered profane fire to God and as a result were devoured by fire?

TEENS TODAY QUIZ #10

Name : _____

Tel No. : _____

Address : _____

All students are invited to send their answers under Teens Today Quiz #10 to 1 Derbyshire Road, Singapore 309457

teens

FOR THE YOUTHS AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

5



Why Worry?

Homework, peer pressure, pimples and money are some of the problems we face in our youth. I recall an occasion in my primary school days when I could not finish my homework in time: I was so fearful I wished the earth would just swallow me up!

WORRIES CRIPPLE US

Different Bible versions translate the Greek word *Merimnao*, “worry” or “anxious concern”, in different ways, such as: take thought, anxiety, and cares (overly) (Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31; Phil 4:6-8; 1 Pet 5:7). Broadly, it means being worried to the point of being distracted or troubled. When this happens, our lives are disrupted and we cannot perform our daily tasks effectively.

GOD CARES FOR US

In Matthew 6:25-26, the Lord tells us, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

Yes, we should not worry, because God is looking out for us! If He takes care of lesser creatures like the birds or the lilies, how much more will He take care of us!

COMMIT AND DON'T PUT OFF

In Matthew 6:27, the Lord asks, “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” This means worrying does not help us accomplish our goals; rather, it hinders us! We cannot get our work done by worrying. Hence, in verse 34, the Lord advises, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

The practical wisdom we can learn from this verse is to tackle problems without procrastination. We often put off doing our work until it snowballs into a mountainous pile. The key is to commit all to the Lord and by His grace do each task wholeheartedly. In the morning, commit the day to Him by praying, “Dear Lord, I thank You for yet another day. Please guide and bless me. Grant me the discipline and the wisdom to do all for Your glory.”

IF NECESSARY, ASK FOR HELP

If something is really beyond you, ask the Lord about whom you can approach for help. When we obtain the help we need, we will really give thanks for our family members and friends! That will surely be a fine lesson on humility, caring and sharing. The apostle Paul advises, “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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6-7).

DON'T WORRY, GOD CARES!

There is a popular catchy song that goes, “Don't worry. Be happy.” Some people in the world try to ignore their problems by acting as if they do not exist. But Christians have a better way of dealing with their worries. 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” To cast is to throw upon. What a relief to toss our troubles to God! Christians do have problems like any other, but we have Someone who is willing to take our problems upon Himself, so we need not worry. As Christians, we can boldly adopt our own phrase, “Why worry? God cares!”

... Continued from page 4

ANSWERS TO TEENS TODAY QUIZ #9

(All about First John)

1. Light, Love (1:5; 4:8).
2. Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:9).
3. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, the water, and the blood (5:7-8).
4. Because the children's sins are forgiven them for Jesus' name's sake, and they have known the Father. Because the young men are strong, and the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one (2:12-14).
5. Love one another (4:11).
6. Because if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (2:15).
7. Because there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (4:18).
8. Children (3:1).
9. He walked (2:6).
10. Because He first loved us (4:19).
11. Hears (5:14).
12. Jesus Christ (2:1). An advocate is one who speaks in defence of or in favour of another person (Longman dictionary).

We Will Be Glad And Rejoice In His Salvation

On 23 January 99, the Lord greatly shamed His enemy in my family – my mother was finally and decidedly baptised!

Since I received the Lord more than 12 years ago, I have been praying for my family. The many examples of household salvation in the Bible (Acts) put into my heart strong faith that this same Jesus Christ will do no less for me, for the family is the basic unit of His salvation.

Although it seemed impossible that my folks would turn away from idols to the living God, my heart was fixed. I simply took the Lord at His word and continued praying, especially for my parents. My father was very strict and hard-hearted, so I was initially afraid to tell him about Jesus. As for my mother, well, in a sense, it was even more difficult. When I first preached the gospel to her, she accepted it readily! I was overjoyed and surer than ever that the Lord would quickly fulfil His promise to me. Shortly after, I brought her to a gospel meeting, and when she stood up to receive the Lord, I couldn't hold back my tears. But I was soon terribly disappointed when I discovered that she did all that just to please me! It wasn't real at all – she did not truly believe!

I was brought so low that I began to question my faith in the Lord's promise. Perhaps, as someone suggested, "you and your household" referred only to me and my future family, and not my present family. I was so upset, fearing that my parents and siblings might perish. But our God is a faithful and true God. There is neither shadow of turning nor ambiguity in Him. One day, as I was reading the story of Rahab the harlot – how God had been faithful to her in sparing her father's house, and "all that they have" (Joshua 2:13) – my faith found its anchor again and my heart was confirmed anew. I bowed in repentance for my little faith, and worshipped God for His faithfulness. Indeed, if He kept His promise to a Gentile prostitute, would He not much more fulfil His word to His own child? I cried from deep within, "Father, I believe!"

In the years following this fundamental transaction with God for my family's salvation, the Lord began to work on my family members and me. On one hand, He softened their hearts through difficult circumstances in their lives – especially in my father's heart during his last days – that they might turn to Him. On the other hand, He continually strengthened my faith by speaking to my heart. For example, "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19), nor "alter the word that has gone out of My lips" (Psalms 89:34), and especially, "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfilment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45). He taught me to cooperate with Him by witnessing for Him, and to wait before Him in patience and trust. "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us... We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

Several years later, my mother was finally fully convicted. The Lord cut off idolatry from her life, and impressed upon her the need to be baptised. Despite that, she still had much fears and misgivings. Just before the baptism

meeting, she was still wavering between "Yes" and "No". Having exhausted all our words, we could only ask her to pray to the Lord again. On the morning of 23 January, as I was preparing to go to work, she exclaimed loudly in her room, "Oh, I've been awake since three this morning. I just couldn't sleep at all!" Immediately, I went to her, looked at her in the eyes and solemnly said, "Mama, it is the Lord moving within you. He wants you to be baptised." Before I could finish, she firmly replied, "Yes, it is the Lord Jesus. I shall be baptised tonight!" Oh, I was so joyful I could hardly believe my ears! The Lord has greatly triumphed over His enemy! Truly, in His name, all knees have to bow, all difficulties have to succumb and give way, for He is the Lord!

Sis Lee Sai Guek

Announcements



Prayer Items



Gospel Meetings

Date : 18 - 19 June 1999

Time : 7.30 p.m.

Venue : Hall 1

Date : 20 June 1999

Time : 5 p.m.

Venue : Hall 1

Adults' Conference

Date : 29 May - 1 June 1999

Venue : Desaru Impian Hotel, Johor

Students' Camp

Date : 6 - 9 June 1999

Venue : Hall 1

Marriage Thanksgiving Meeting

Brother Lai Kwok Kin & Sister Leong Wai Wai

Date : 27 June 1999

Time : 3.30 p.m.

Venue : Hall 1