

A.B. Simpson:

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."-Rom. viii : 37.

It is a great thing to be a conqueror in Christian life and conflict. It is a much greater thing to be a conqueror "in all these things" which the apostle names, a perfect host of trials, troubles and foes. But what does it mean to be "more than conqueror"?

It means to have a decisive victory. There are some victories that cost nearly as much as defeats, and a few more such triumphs would annihilate us. There are some battles which have to be renewed again and again until we are exhausted with the ceaseless strife. Many a Christian is kept in constant warfare through lack of courage to venture on a bold and final contest and end the strife by a decisive victory. It is blessed so to die that we are dead indeed; so to yield that the last strand of the heart's reluctance is severed; so to say "no" to the enemy that he will never repeat the solicitation. There are decisive battles in the world's history, conflicts whose issues settle the future of an empire or of a world, and the soul has such battles too. God is able to give us the grace so to win in a few encounters that there shall be no doubt about the side on which the victory falls and no danger of the contest ever being renewed again. Other battles we may have and shall have, but surely it is possible for us to settle the questions that meet us, one by one, and settle them forever.

Beloved, are not some of you weakened by this indecisiveness in your views of truth, in your steps of faith, in your refusals of temptation, in your surrender to God, in your consecration to His service and your obedience to His special call? You have been just uncertain enough to keep the question open and tempt the adversary to renew the conflict evermore. We sometimes read in God's word after one of David's hardest conflicts, or one of Joshua's boldest triumphs, "the land had rest from war!" Thus we have rest by becoming "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

It is to have such a victory as will effectually break the adversary's power and not only defend us from his attacks but effectually weaken and destroy his strength. This is one of the purposes of temptation, that we may be workers together with God in destroying evil. We read of Joshua's battles that "it was of the Lord that these kings should come against Joshua in battle for this very purpose, that they might be utterly destroyed." It was not enough for Israel to beat them off and be saved from their attacks, but God wanted them exterminated. And so when God allows the enemy to appear in our lives it is that we may do him irreparable and eternal injury, and thus glorify God and be workers with Christ in destroying the works of the devil. For this purpose God frequently brings to light in our own lives and in our work for God, evils that were concealed, not that they might crush us, but that we might put them aside. But for their discovery and resistance they might still have remained unrevealed and some day have broken out with fatal effectiveness. But God allows them to be provoked into activity in order to challenge our resistance and lead to our aggressive and victorious advance against them. Therefore when we find anything in our own hearts and lives, or in connection with the work of our Master committed to our hands, which seems to threaten our triumph or His work, let us remember that God has allowed it to confront us, that, in His name, it might be forever put aside and rendered powerless to injure or oppose again.

Beloved, are we thus fighting the good fight of faith, resisting the devil and rising up for God against them that do wickedly? Are we looking upon our adversaries and our obstacles as things that have come, not to crush us, but to be put aside and become tributary to our successes and our Master's glory? Thus shall we be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and as the prophet beautifully expresses it, "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of naught."

It is to have such a victory as brings actual benefit out of the battle and makes it tributary to our own and our Master's cause. It is possible in a certain sense to take our enemies prisoners and make them fight in our ranks, or at least do the menial work of our camp. It is possible to get such good out of Satan's assaults that he shall actually become our ally without intending it and shall find with eternal chagrin that he has been doing us real service. Doubtless he thought, when he stirred up Pharaoh to murder the little children of the Hebrews, that he was exterminating a race of which he was afraid. But that very act of his brought Moses into Pharaoh's house and raised up a deliverer for Israel and the destroyer of Pharaoh. Surely that was being "more than conqueror!" The devil was not only beaten but made to work in the Lord's chain-gang as a galley slave. Again, he

overmatched himself when he instigated Haman to build his lofty gallows and send forth the decree for Israel's extermination, for he had the misery of seeing Haman hang on those gallows and Israel delivered. So again, no doubt, he put the Hebrew children into the furnace and Daniel into the den of lions hoping to destroy the last remnant of godliness on the earth, but lo! these heroes were "more than conquerors." Not only did they escape their destroyer, but their deliverance led to the proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar, magnifying the truth of God through the entire Babylonian empire, and to the similar confession of Darius, recognizing God throughout all the confines of the still greater Persian empire. Surely Satan was more than beaten that time!

His most audacious attempt was the crucifixion of our Lord, and all hell, no doubt, held high jubilee on that dark afternoon when Jesus sank to death; but lo! the cross has become the weapon by which Satan's head is already bruised and his kingdom is yet to be exterminated. So God makes him forge the weapons of his own destruction, and hurl the thunderbolts that fall back upon his own head. So may we ever thus turn his fiercest assaults to our advantage, and to the glory of our King.

It is very interesting to look at the old frontispiece in Wickliffe's Bible, where a group of figures are gathered round a fire which is bursting through the open pages of a holy Bible. Their countenances all wear a look of consternation, and with one consent they are gathered round the fire, trying to blow it out. There are bishops and archbishops of the church of Rome, and the devil at the head of the crowd, all blowing lustily with swollen cheeks and strained countenances. But lo! the more they blow the more it burns, until at last the fierce blaze leaps up so high and out so far and wide that they are obliged to shrink back, and even Satan himself, though used to such an atmosphere, is glad to escape from its consuming flame. So let us overcome and more than overcome our spiritual foes.

The best thing they do for us often is the discipline they bring us in our spiritual life. In this way, and in this alone, do we learn to exercise victorious faith and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The two things that the Christian needs most are the power to believe and the power to suffer, and these the enemy often comes to teach us. Not until we are ready to sink beneath the pressure do we often learn the secret of triumph. It was a great thing for the American nation that she had the Mexican War before she had the War of the Rebellion. It was there that her officers were trained and fitted to lead the armies of the greater struggle. So the Lord lets the devil act as drill sergeant in His army, and teach His children the use of His spiritual weapons. So we may "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of our faith worketh patience."

This, indeed, is to be "more than conqueror," to learn such lessons from the enemy as will fit us for his next assaults and prepare us to meet him without fear of defeat. There are some things that cannot easily be learned. Our spiritual senses seem to require the pressure of difficulty and suffering to awaken all their capacities and to constrain us to prove the full resources of heavenly grace. God's school of faith always is trial, and God's school of love is provocation and wrong. Instead therefore of murmuring against our lot and wondering why we are permitted to be so tried, let us glorify God and put our adversary to shame by wringing a blessing from Satan's hate and hell's hostility, and we shall find, after a while, that the enemy will be glad to let us alone for his own sake if not for ours.

To be "more than conqueror" is not only to have the victory, but the spoils of victory. When Jehoshaphat's army won their great deliverance from the hordes of Moab and Ammon, it took them three days to gather all the spoils of their enemies' camps. When David captured the camp of Ziklag's destroyers he won so vast a booty that he was able to send rich presents over all Israel among his brethren. When the lepers found their way to the deserted camp of the Syrians they found such abundance that in a single hour the famine of Samaria was turned into satiety. And so our spiritual conflicts and conquests have their rich reward in the treasures recovered from the hands of the enemy. How many things there are which Satan possesses which we might and should enjoy! Oh, the rich delight which fills the heart when we expel the giants of ill-temper, irritation, haste, hatred, malice and envy who long have ravaged and preyed upon all the sweetness of our life. What a luxuriant land we now enter into, when we overcome these foes, and how delightfully the spoils of peace and love and sweetness and heavenly joy are enriching us in the very things where once they reigned! How rich the spoils recovered from the cruel adversary when through the name of Jesus he is driven from our body, and the suffering frame which had groaned and trembled under his oppression springs into health and freedom and yields all the fullness of its strength to the service of God and the joy of a victorious life. Oh, the rich reward that comes to the home that has been rescued from the dominancy of the devil, perhaps in the form of drunkenness in a husband and father, or of shameful lust, or sinful vanity, or empty frivolity, or heartless worldliness, or bitter strife, evil speaking and anger in some other heart, and life once more becomes a happy Eden, with love and peace enthroned by the hearth and altar of a Christian home. Oh, the rich spoils that are to come from a world rescued from the hand of its cruel usurper. How it will bloom again in beauty, fruitfulness

and blessedness, and yield its riches to its benignant and rightful King and to those who dare to conquer it for Him and shall share with Him its happy Millennial sway!

God takes special delight in making that a blessing to us which has been recovered from Satan's power. The two mightiest strongholds of ancient Canaan were Hebron and Zion. The former was the seat of the Anakim, the giant chieftains of Canaan; but the brave, heroic Caleb dared to challenge them in their lair, and in the strength of God was "more than conqueror" over their terrific strength, and won the heights of Hebron as his special inheritance. But not only did he receive the dear old city of Abraham as his portion and spoil, but God took peculiar delight in subsequently blessing and honoring this very place, it would seem, just because it had been snatched from the very jaws of the enemy; for Hebron was the chosen seat where David's throne was subsequently established, and where God began the kingdom of Israel which He Himself is yet to rule in the coming age of Israel's restoration.

Still more defiant was the strength of the citadel of Zion. It was the last stronghold that the Canaanites relinquished. All through the days of Joshua and his successors they succeeded in holding it; all through the centuries of the Judges, all through the days of Saul, all through the early days of even David's kingdom. The fortress was impregnable so that the haughty Canaanites told their enemies in scorn that they would only deign to garrison it with the blind and the lame and they challenged them to capture it from its feeble and crippled defenders. But David met the challenge and Joab executed it by a glorious assault and took by storm the heights of Zion from the last chieftains of Canaan. Then it was that Israel found its true metropolis and the rescued stronghold was set apart by God Himself to be the very seat of the sacred kingdom and the monument of the glorious victory which had been achieved. There it was that David reigned; there it was that Solomon in all his glory swayed his glorious sceptre; there it was that the temple rose from the adjoining heights of Moriah full in view of Zion; there it is that Jesus is coming soon to reign once more. Oh, how rich and glorious the recompense of a single victory! How different the world's history if the old Canaanites had still been permitted to hold the heights of Jebus!

Beloved, the richest treasure of your life is held by Satan. He is too shrewd to waste his strength upon what is worthless. He has put his hand upon the sweetest, dearest and most precious things of life, and whether in your heart, in your home, or in your circle of acquaintance, there you may be sure there is a Hebron or a Zion that God wants you to overcome, and in overcoming which you shall find the richest inheritance of your life and your eternity, and shall forever say with rejoicing, as you realize the full meaning of your victory, "more than conqueror through Him that loved us."

"More than conquerors" means not only the spoils of war and triumph over all the assaults of our foes, but it means new territory, aggressive warfare, and positive and even larger conquests for the glory of our Lord and the salvation of others. Merely to beat back your foes is but a small part of the great commission of the Christian soldier. He is called not only to wield the shield of faith but also the sword of the Spirit by which he moves against the conquered foe and claims new territory with each advance. We have the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. The armor on the left is for defense, but the armor on the right is for aggression. We are called, not only to "withstand in the evil day," but to go forth and reclaim the world for Christ. Such conflicts meet us in our Christian work at every step, in the souls we seek to win for Jesus, in the progress of truth, the spread of the gospel, the awakening and reviving of the church of God, the elevation of Christian life and holiness, the suppression of evil in all its myriad and gigantic forms around us, the evangelization of the world and the hastening of our Master's Kingdom and Coming. Surely we should not be ever occupied in holding our own salvation. Indeed, we shall hold it best by leaving it with God and pressing on to claim the salvation of others.

In the last great European war the aggressors were the victors. If Germany had waited to be attacked and simply defended herself, probably she might have failed. But with wise and prompt aggression she hurled her hosts across the Rhine and into the battlefields of France and marched from victory to victory, her recompense being not only the conquest of her enemy's country, but the security of her own as well and her citizens, from even the touch of the enemy.

This is the best way to keep the devil off our territory; keep him busy on his own, defending his kingdom from our bold attacks. Beloved, have we settled the question of our own salvation and Christian life, and are we at leisure for the battles of the Lord and thus "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" ?

"More than conquerors" means not only to win your battle and save your territory, but to do honor to your Captain and your God, to be a credit to your cause and so to acquit yourself in the campaign that God shall be glorified. Many of our battles are fought in view of heaven alone. That is a strange picture that the apostle gives

of his trials, "We are made a gazing-stock to angels and principalities." Have you not felt, beloved, in some quiet hour, in the secret of your closet, that you were going through a decisive battle which no mortal saw. Within the silent walls of your chamber an issue was being decided which would affect all eternity. The question was, should you be true to God, should you trust Him, should you obey God, or should you compromise? It was a great thing for you that you gained the victory, but it was a greater thing for your Lord. Oh, how intently He watches these spectacles! How the ranks of hell and heaven look on as some David and Goliath fight alone amidst the gaze of other worlds! How your Saviour's brow flushes with shame if you betray Him, or even shrink! How the ranks of hell shout with satisfaction when you betray the slightest weakness! And how your Master smiles with glad approval and sees of the travail of His soul with satisfaction, as like some ancient hero you dare to answer, "Our God is able to deliver us, but if not we will not bow down to the graven image which thou hast set up."

Do you know, beloved, that Christ's greatest victories were alone with God and the devil? No human eye saw that victory in the wilderness, but God saw it and was glorified. Shall we stand for Him, and so stand that He can count us, as He did His ancient prophet, His very towers and fortresses behind which He can intrench Himself and His cause, and say to us, "I have made thee this day a defenced city and an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land. They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee. I have made thy face strong against their faces and thy forehead against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks though they be a rebellious house." God wants men and women today, on whom He can depend, to stand as bulwarks and battlements against the shocks of hell's artillery. Men and women of whom he can say, "upon this rock have I built my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Shall we, beloved, be not only conquerors, but trusted soldiers whom God can use as His battle-axes and His weapons of war, as His mighty iron-clads, to carry the battle to the very ships of the enemy, not fearing their hardest blows, and hurling against them the thunder-bolts of His victorious power?

"More than conquerors" means not only victory but final triumph and eternal reward. How Heaven will recompense her victors some glorious day! Two cities today are struggling for the tomb of the man who was honored in this land as the leader of the victorious army that won the battle of the Rebellion. He is honored simply because he was a conqueror. How little these earthly victories will seem some day in the light of the triumph of a Stephen, a Paul, a David Livingstone, or some gentle woman or lowly man, who stood faithful to God on some quiet battlefield which decided the issues of life, perhaps the future of nations and ages! For four things Paul expected a crown, but the first of them was because he had fought the good fight of faith. Among the special recompenses of the Day of His Appearing there is a crown, not only for the martyr, not only for the faithful minister, not only for those who love His appearing, but for "the man that endureth temptation." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." There is a chance for all of you. There is a chance for you who think that you have the hardest time of any human being.

Beloved, it is but an opportunity for coronation. Will you not only triumph, but so triumph that you shall wear a crown of life in which these tears which you shed today shall flash as crystal diamonds, and these scars of battle shall be transformed into marks of eternal beauty and everlasting honor?

But mere enthusiasm or even high and glorious purpose will not accomplish this great result. It is "through Him that loved us" that we must overcome. Thank God that is possible for us all! He whom Joshua saw as Captain of the Lord's Host and whom Joshua took as his Great Commander-in-chief waits to lead your battle and claim your victory too. "I have overcome for thee," He stands exclaiming by thy side. Commit thy conflict to His hands, take Him into thy heart as strength, "be strong in the Lord and the power of His might," and "put on the whole armor of God that ye may stand against the wiles of the devil." "The battle is not yours but God's." "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace," and when all is accomplished and the banner waves in triumph and the crown is bestowed, we shall drape our battle-flags around His throne, and lay our diadems at His feet, and cry, not the old version, "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph," but "thanks be unto God which leadeth us in triumph through Jesus Christ our Lord." "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."