



GAD
the Conquered
Yet Conquering Tribe

RALPH ERSKINE (1685-1752)

GAD, THE CONQUERED YET CONQUERING TRIBE

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GAD, THE CONQUERED YET CONQUERING TRIBE

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.”

—Genesis 49:19

Jacob is here upon his death-bed making his will; and though the eyes of his body were become dim, yet the eye of his mind was enlightened to see what would befall his children. The twelve sons of Jacob were men of renown, but the twelve tribes of Israel that descended from them were yet more renowned. We find their names upon the gates of the new Jerusalem.

From the third verse on we have the predictions concerning each tribe. This verse concerns *Gad*, and is in allusion to the name, which signifies a troop. Jacob foresaw that they were to be a warlike tribe, and so we find they were. The Gadites, it is said, “were men of might, men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains” (1Ch 12:8). He foresaw that the situation of this tribe, on the other side Jordan, would expose it to the excursions of the neighbouring Moabites and Ammonites. And here two things are told about them.

First, something for their humiliation, to prevent their pride. That they might not be puffed up with their strength and valour, they are told that the troops of their enemies should overcome them: “A troop shall overcome him.”

And second, something for their consolation: to prevent their discouragement by their defeat, he assures them that they should “overcome at the last,” which was fulfilled when, in Saul’s time and David’s, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued.

This, together with all other Scriptures, is given for our instruction, and represents the lot of God’s Church and people to the end of the world. Hence I deduce the following observation, *that the Israel of God may, for a time, be vanquished, and defeated by troops of enemies; yet they shall be victorious at last.*

Thus grace in the soul is frequently foiled in its conflicts; troops of corruption overcome it. But the cause is God’s; and grace will, in the issue, come off a conqueror. Yea, “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37).

Instances in Scripture of the defeat and conquest of God’s people are many. Jacob seemed to be defeated as he was obliged to fly from Esau, but he defeated him at last. Joseph was defeated by a troop of cruel brethren, but he overcame at last. Israel was many times overcome by troops of enemies; but overcame at last. Christ, the Captain of

salvation, seemed to be overcome for a while, by troops and armies of assaulting oppositions from heaven, earth, and hell, by which He was brought down to the dust of death; but He was victorious, and overcame at last.

Here we may touch a little, through divine aid, on the following heads.

First: at the foils which the Israel of God meets with; and shew what are the troops that defeat them in this world, and how far they may overcome them.

Second: speak of their victory, and how they may be said to overcome at last.

Third: offer reasons of the doctrine, showing why they are many times overcome, and why they shall overcome at last.

Fourth: make application of the whole subject.

1. The Foils Met with in the World

The foils which the Israel of God meet with in this world. Here observe these two things: what are the troops that overcome them; and how far the troops may overcome them.

First, what are the troops that overcome the Israel of God in this world? We reply in the following particulars.

One. There is a troop of lusts and corruptions, by which they are many times defeated. "Iniquities prevail against me," says David (Psa 65:3). This is a numerous troop, comprehending vain thoughts, and vile imaginations; besetting the soul in hearing, praying, and every religious duty. This troop is a body of sin that makes the Israel of God to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" (Rom 7:24).

Two. There is a troop of ungodly men in the world that they fight with, and that sometimes overcome them. "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation" (Psa 43:1). This is a troop that many times bears down the work of God in a Church and in the heart. As Israel of old, so it is with the Church in all ages. She is never without enemies that annoy her: sometimes the tyrant, by heart-hatred and open persecution; the atheist, by profaneness of life; the heretic, by corruption of doctrine; and the hypocrite, by mere pretences to holiness.

Three. There is a troop of devils that annoys and defeats them, while they wrestle not only with "flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers" (Eph 6:12). The devil and his instruments are the troops of hell that surround them, and armies from the bottomless pit that assault and throw fiery darts of temptation at them.

Four. There is a troop of officers in Church and state, civil or ecclesiastic,¹ that sometimes fall heavily upon them. Thus Christ warns His disciples, that "they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" (Mat 10:17-18). And He warns them not to be offended, saying, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think

¹ **ecclesiastic** – of or relating to the Church or its clergy.

that he doeth God service” (Joh 16:2). I might here mention many troops and armies of oppositions they may meet with, as troops of earthly cares, of hellish snares, of grievous trials, and cross dispensations.² But I hasten to show,

Secondly, how far the troops may overcome them. I shall mention four degrees of victory that the enemies may obtain over them.

One. The troops may overcome them so far as to bring them to distress and great bondage, as Israel in Egypt, and in the days of Nehemiah, when he said, “Thou seest the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste”(Neh 2:17). The child of God may be brought to David’s prayer, “O bring thou me out of my distresses” (Psa 25:17).

Two. The troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to discouragement and distress. Thus it was with David, when troops of sin and iniquity had defeated him, and gone over his head: “I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart” (Psa 38:8).

Three. A troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to despair. This is a sorer defeat, when the child of God is so far overcome as to say, “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall” (Lam 3:18-19). So far were the disciples overcome with the troop of temptation, when their Lord was buried that their hope was waning, when they said, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luk 24:21); but now, might they say, we find ourselves mistaken; our hope is gone. Oh! What a great victory does the enemy gain, when the Israel of God are brought to despair!

Four. A troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to the sentence of death, and death itself. To the sentence of death, as it was with the apostle. “We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2Co 1:9). Yea, to death itself. “Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (Joh 16:2). And thus you read of the killing of the witnesses in Revelation 11:7. The Church cries, “They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me” (Lam 3:53). Alas! How has a troop overcome them, when they are saying, “Behold...Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” (Eze 37:11). And “Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth” (Psa 141:7).

O Sirs, where is the Christian that is not conquered many a time by a troop of inward corruptions and outward temptations? Where is the tribe of Israel that may not be named by the tribe of Gad? “A troop shall overcome them.” How does the enemy overcome their faith, hope, patience, courage and comfort, and dash them down to the ground!

² **dispensations** – divine ordering of worldly affairs.

2. The Victory of the True Israel of God

The second thing proposed was to speak of their victory: "They shall overcome at last." As did Gad, so shall all the true Israel of God. Here consider, How and when they overcome.

First, how they shall overcome. I name six means, by which they do this.

One. *They overcome by knowledge.* "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan 11:32). And particularly, by getting knowledge of, and acquaintance with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned their old general, the devil, under whose standard all the children of men by nature wage war against God. But by the knowledge of Christ, they are strong; for by Him strengthening them, they can do all things. They overcome by knowledge of the warfaring life of the Christian, so as to be resolved upon this life, and not to be lying in a bed of ease. By knowledge of the nature of the war, that it is spiritual, and that the weapons of it are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down strongholds and casting down imaginations. By knowledge of the necessity of new recruits of grace and strength from Jesus Christ. This knowledge comprehends acquaintance also with the opposite interest and parties concerned in the war: grace on the one side, and corruption on the other; Christ on the one side, and the devil and the world on the other. It comprehends also a knowledge of the power and policy of the enemy, and of the power and wisdom of the Captain to counteract the enemy. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

Two. *They overcome by faith.* "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1Jo 5:4), The lusts and the god of this world are thus overcome: "Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1Pe 5:9). "Above all, taking the shield of faith" (Eph 6:16). By faith we wax valiant in fight. Faith hath a sister that is called Hope, and they are both joined together, as part of the Christian armour, where faith serves for a breastplate: and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Three. *They overcome by love.* This is also joined with that same faith, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love" (1Th 5:8). Love is a very strong piece of armour that can go through troops of oppositions. "Love is strong as death...Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:6-7).

Four. *They overcome by prayer.* "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mat 26:41). This weapon ye find among the rest, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18). This weapon Paul used when a messenger from Satan attacked him: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice" (2Co 12:8). The prayerless man is a vanquished man; but as long as a man can pray in faith and in the Spirit, he is armed against the devil and his troops. It is best wrestling against Satan on our knees; cease praying, and victory is gone.

Five. *They overcome by the blood of Christ.* This is the principal weapon, without which the rest are useless. It is the blood of Christ that satisfied justice, purchases victory, cleanseth from all sin. When Satan bruised the heel of the woman's seed, Christ, the promised Seed, gave the serpent's head a blow, as it were, with His bloody heel, and

broke the devil's head therewith. For that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

Six. *They overcome by the Word*, which is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). Christ repels Satan with this Word, "It is written" (Mat 4:4). "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:14). Are ye assaulted with the troops of temptation? Then call to mind God's Word of command, threatening, and promise. You may do thus, and thus, says Satan; but say you, so and so hath God commanded. There is no harm, says Satan; nay, say you, so and so hath God threatened. You will be nothing the better of your religion, says Satan; nay, say you, So and so hath God promised. Is sin and corruption strong? Then plead the promise, saying, as it is, "Didst not thou...swear...Solomon...shall reign...? why then doth Adonijah reign?" (1Ki 1:13). Thus they overcome.

These two weapons, the blood of Christ, and the Word, are joined together, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11). By cleaving zealously to the cause of truth, they were helped to convince their beholders, and confound their enemies, to confirm their friends, and so overcome the troop of opposers.

Secondly, when or how they overcome at last. These six things are here imported.³

One. *The partial victory* they obtain in time, as it were, with the enemy, when the Lord returns to them, and faith gets up its head, and their spiritual armour is exercised.

Two. *The final and full victory* they obtain at death and judgment, when, as the last enemy to be destroyed is death; so death itself shall be swallowed up in victory. They "shall overcome at the last."

Three. *A gradual victory*; or that to which they come by various degrees, risings and failings, hopes and fears; yet by little and little, as the Lord drove out the Canaanites before Israel.

Four. *A difficult victory*, that is not obtained till the last, for "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Mat 11:12). They must force their way to the very last.

Five. *A mysterious victory*, wherein they conquer, even when conquered; and by being overcome, do overcome. As Christ, by death, destroyed death; so they, by being conquered, do conquer; when, by their foils, they are excited to fight more courageously; and by their falls they are made more circumspect, more humble, tender, and watchful. Thus they "overcome at the last."

Six. *A certain victory* in the issue. "He shall overcome at the last," however uncertain at first, it seems to be. Yea, desperate like, when troops of enemies overcome them; yet He that promises the victory will give it, and make them ascribe it only to Him, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:57).

³ **imported** – meant; signified.

In a word, they may be said to overcome at last, when, however weak, yet “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34); and so “go from strength to strength,” till “every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” (Psa 84:7). When, in extremity, they are helped, so that it may be said, “Jehovah-jireh...in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen” (Gen 22:14): the Lord will provide. When, in the heat of the battle, the Lord makes Himself known by His ancient name, Jehovah-nissi, The LORD their banner. When He shows Himself a present help in time of trouble, when all other help is gone: “For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left” (Deu 32:36). Though the enemy prevails, yet they keep the field; and though they lose many battles, yet they gain the war. In these respects they may be said to overcome at last.

3. The Grounds of this Doctrine

The third thing proposed was, to offer the grounds of the doctrine. There are two things to be evidenced. First, why a troop shall overcome them. Second, why they shall overcome at last.

First, why it is so ordered of God, that His people, while on earth, should be thus overcome?

One. *It is for the honor of God's perfections.* That His wisdom may appear in leading them through the midst of their enemies; His power, in enabling their dead men to rise and regain the conquest; His faithfulness in bringing them through fire and water according to His word; and His goodness in not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able.

Two. *It is for the exercise of their graces,* spiritual arms; yea, He suffers them to be defeated, notwithstanding their arms, that they may learn not to trust to their graces, but to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10).

Three. *It is to make their victory more remarkable, and their heaven more sweet,* where they shall sing an eternal song of victory over all their enemies; and that every new victory they obtain may be the more glorious, and wonderful, when after they were conquered, they became conquerors.

Four. *It is that there may be a conformity between them and their Captain;* for, they are predestinated to be conformed to His image, both in suffering and glory. Now, He was made perfect through suffering; by death He overcame death; by being overcome, He overcame.

Five. *It is to make them humble and dependent;* humble in the sense of their own weakness, while they cannot stand before the enemy without being overcome: the devil, the world, and corruption being too strong for them. And that they may learn to live a life of faith and dependence upon their powerful General.

Six. *Hence it is thus ordered to help their memory.* “Slay them not, lest my people forget” (Psa 59:11). Slay not the enemy, says God, but rather let them slay and

overcome, lest My people forget their prayers, and forget My promise; lest they forget to watch, wait, and keep under My standard.

Secondly, Why they shall overcome at last.

One. *Because their Captain hath conquered all their enemies*, “and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them” in His Cross (Col 2:15). And He is exalted “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21).

Two. *Because their Captain goes before them*; “The breaker is come up before them...and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them” (Mic 2:13). How can they but have success in the issue?

Three. They shall overcome at last, because the Captain follows them, and not only leads. “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward⁴” (Isa 52:11-12); for with His favor will He compass⁵ them. God’s presence with His people will be to them which the pillar of cloud was to Israel, both behind and before them. “Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward” (Isa 58:8). Christ, thy Righteousness, before thee as thy vanguard; and the glory of God, Christ, the Rereward, in Whom God’s glory shines, and on Whom alone we can depend, when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold upon us, or pursued by any other enemy.

Four. They shall overcome at last, *because their enemies are Christ’s enemies*. “I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries” (Exo 23:22). The troops that overcome them are of hell, that fight against the God of heaven; and therefore they shall not prevail. “Moab shall be destroyed...because he hath magnified himself against the LORD” (Jer 48:42).

Five. *Because His honor is concerned*. It is said four times, in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, He fought, or wrought for His name’s sake. When His name and glory is concerned He has more to lose than they. In case they should not overcome at last; they would lose their life, their soul, their salvation; but He would lose His truth, His honor, His glory, which is infinitely greater. Therefore, they shall overcome at last.

Six. *Because they have more for than against them*: their name is Gad, a troop; a company of two armies. Yea, they have many troops and regiments on their side, and, if our eyes were open, according to Elisha’s prayer in 2 Kings 6:17, we might see mountains full of chariots and horses of fire, before the Israel of God. I will name ten troops on their side, by which they cannot fail to overcome at last.

(1) The greatest and strongest is a *troop of divine attributes* surrounding them, “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem” (Psa 125:2). And hence, the place of their

⁴ **rereward** – rear guard.

⁵ **compass** – surround; enclose within.

defence is said to be the munition of rocks: attributes of God, like rocks of defence about them. It is under the shadow of these attributes they are safe and victorious, for He sends forth His mercy and truth for that end. “Be merciful unto me, O God; be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast...He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up...God shall send forth his mercy and his truth” (Psa 57:1, 3). I am God all-sufficient, says God to Abraham; and so to all his spiritual seed. My wisdom, sufficient for your direction; My power, sufficient for your protection. How can these that have such troops for them but overcome at last!

(2) They have a *troop of graces*; namely, faith and all the rest, of which Christ hath prayed that they fail not. “I have prayed for thee,” says Christ to Peter, “that thy faith fail not” (Luk 22:32). And so, He hath prayed that their hope fail not utterly; that their patience fail not; that their love fail not. Therefore, corruption shall fall before grace. “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Under that grace of God, that is the fountain of all graces in them.

(3) They have a *troop of divine offices*, and officers on their side: Christ the chief officer, clothed with all saving offices; whether general, as that of a Saviour, Redeemer, Friend, and Captain of salvation; or particular, as Prophet, Priest, and King, by Whom they cannot but overcome at last. And under-officers, when faithful to their Prince, and armed with the sword of the Spirit, and their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, are helped to defend the Lord’s people from the corruptions of the times, and the troops of corrupt teachers and judicatories.⁶

(4) They have a *troop of saints* and witnesses on their side. Witnessing saints, in past and present times, are spoken of as helpers and encouragers in the holy war; read Hebrews 11. It is said, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus...[that is, the head of the witnessing remnant] who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2). Witnessing saints at present also, so far as they are faithful witnesses for God, will be powerful wrestlers with Him that shall prevail, and through God do valiantly.

(5) They have a *troop of angels* on their side. What havoc did one angel make in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, destroying an hundred fourscore and five thousand. They are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and destructive spirits to their enemies.

(6) They have a *troop of heavenly luminaries* on their side, whenever God pleases to call them to the assistance of His people, even as the stars in their courses fought against

⁶ **judicatories** – courts of law.

Sisera. God has made sometimes the stars of heaven and the sun in the firmament, to subserve⁷ the design of His people's overcoming their enemies.

(7) They have a *troop of earthly creatures* on their side. God has sometimes raised up an army of inferior creatures, frogs, lice, flies, and vermin: a formidable troop to invade the enemies' camp, and make Israel to overcome, as in Egypt. For when their ways please the Lord, they are in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field are at peace with them and at war with their enemies.

(8) They have a *troop of prayers* on their side, which God, the Hearer of prayers, hath obliged Himself to answer. Both the prayer of their High-priest upon the throne, Whom the Father hears always, and Who hath prayed for Jerusalem, and Whom God answers with good comfortable words, saying, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it" (Zec 1:16), notwithstanding all opposing enemies, and also the prayers of His people, offered in the faith of acceptance through Christ: these shall be answered, for the Lord hath said it, "When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psa 102:16-17). As the prayer of faith hath power with God, so this troop hath sometimes been terrible to His enemies.

(9) They have a *troop of promises* to side with them, and assure them, that they shall overcome at last. Though they be overcome, yet it is promised them that they shall overcome at last. Compare "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev 13:7) with "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14). It is promised, the Lamb shall overcome them; and make His followers overcomers. And, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and...Amen, unto the glory of God" (2Co 1:20), and therefore this troop shall overcome for them. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of His word shall fall to the ground.

(10) They have a *troop of divine providences*, however cross in appearance to bring about their complete victory, for, "All things work together for good to them," (Rom 8:28); even all the victories that the enemy doth obtain over them. "All these things are against me," said Jacob; and yet they were working for him. All Joseph's troubles, and the afflictions that he met with, were but bringing about his advancement. And so, all the defeats that the believer meets with contribute to his being victor at last. Even all the plots of hell, and rage of men and devils against Christ, contributed to bring about His triumphant victory; so, all His people, however conquered, shall overcome at last. Though a troop overcome them, yet having these numerous troops on their side, the final victory shall be theirs also.

⁷ **subserve** – help to further or promote.

4. The Application

The next thing proposed was the application. If it be so, as in the first branch of the doctrine, that the Israel of God may for a time be defeated by troops of enemies and oppositions, hence see,

One. That the state of the Church and children of God in this world is not only a militant state, but a mastered state, conquered by their enemies within and without; Israel may be long in bondage. Believers may be long under captivity to the law of sin and death. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23). Think it not a new or strange thing, to see the cause and people of God oppressed and borne down, vanquished and overcome.

Two. Hence see, it is no small opposition that the Lord's people should lay their account with: "A troop shall overcome him;" importing, that confederate forces against them may be expected. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us" (Psa 2:2-3).

Three. Hence see, that confederate powers against the people of God, may be conquering powers for a time; they may gain the day for a while, and the Lord only knows how long. The Israel of God may be put to cry under the continued prevalence of inward corruption, and outward opposition, as, "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD, for ever...How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psa 13:1-2).

Four. Hence see, that the true Israel of God are involuntary captives to their enemies: sin, Satan, and the world of wicked men, but are never voluntary subjects or servants to them. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him," against his will; he shall never incorporate with the troop, nor make league with the enemy. The doctrine of the falls of believers may be dangerous to the secure, and a stone of stumbling to them. Why, say they, I am daily overcome by sin; daily mastered with corruption; but, my blessing on the minister, for he gives me hope, saying, believers may be just like me. And so I conclude myself among the number of believers, and hope to be saved as well as the best. Alas! Beware, man, lest this kind of reasoning prove your spot to be none of the spots of God's children. *The saints may fall before the enemy, but they will not lie in the puddle like the swine in the mire, but rather struggle like a sheep in the mire, restless till relief come.*

Five. Hence see the reason of the variations and the changes in the believer's case: a troop may overcome him, but he is overcome with a *but*. There is opposition to opposition in the case; and, as the enemy treads upon him, so sometimes he treads upon the enemy; and, by turns, they defeat one another, so as the issue seems dubious, and the poor believer fears, lest one day he fall by the hand of Saul.

Six. Hence see the matter of daily humiliation and exercise to the children of God while they are here in the world, where they may expect certainly, that a troop shall overcome them; and therefore they ought not to be secure, but watchful. They ought not

to be proud, but humble; they ought not to be lazy, but active; they ought not to faint, but to fight. Spiritual action is the first and last part of a Christian. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mat 10:22). It is dangerous to parley with temptation, whether you should venture on such a sin or not; though you should muster up arguments, you may find the devil a better politician than you. His agents also, may defeat you in point of policy, and reason more strongly against the cause of Christ, than you can do for it. They may silence you in dispute, but it were best in such a case, to say, when unable to answer subtle adversaries, Though I cannot reason and argue for Christ, yet I will fight for Him, witness for Him, suffer for Him; and, by grace, die for Him.

Seven. Is it so, that the true Israel of God shall overcome at last? Hence see then, matter of examination. Let us search and try if we be of the tribe of Gad, that however conquered for a while, shall overcome at last. See if you be in a spiritual sense, what Gad was in another. The tribe of Gad was a warlike, wrestling, valiant and victorious tribe. Try then what Spirit you are of.

(1) Have you got a warlike spirit against sin, Satan, and the world? If so, then you have seen yourself by nature slave to these enemies, to your lusts, to Satan, and a drudge to the world; you have found the cursed chain of sin, dragging you downward, downward, downward! You have seen yourself in bondage to spiritual enemies, and would have given a thousand worlds to be out of this house of bondage. You have got a view of the glory of the Captain of salvation, so as to come under His colors, knowing that there is no fighting, no overcoming, but by His strength; “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD” (Zec 4:6). Have you the Spirit of warfare, so as to carry on a perpetual warfare against sin, and never to be at peace with it?

(2) The tribe of Gad was a wrestling tribe; they wrestled with their enemies, and with God, like their father Jacob, for victory over their enemies. Hence it is said of them, “They cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated⁸ of them; because they put their trust in him” (1Ch 5:20). Try if you have a wrestling spirit: know you what it is to wrestle with God for the blessing; to wrestle with God for victory over your lusts? And as it was the Lord’s battle, that the tribe of Gad fought against the enemies of God, so see what side you are on, for only they that are on God’s side, on Christ’s side, on truth’s side, shall be at last victorious.

Eight. Hence see matter of terror to the enemies of God, who are fighting against His work, cause, and interest; though they overcome at first, yet they shall be overcome at last. Though you should prevail for a while, you shall be defeated at last. If you continue in the enemies’ camp, fighting with the dragon and his angels, against Michael and his: fight as you will, you shall be destroyed at last. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1Co 15:26), but you may be amongst the first enemies to be destroyed. If you remain, O sinner, an enemy to the Son of God, know that all the instruments of the devil, and workers for him, are appointed to destruction. “The enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of rams: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away” (Psa

⁸ **intreated** – entreated; made an earnest request.

37:20). God hath promised to Christ, that His enemies shall lick the very dust. You may think that you carry the day, when you get the ministers and people of God oppressed, but, God shall arise, as in mount Perazim; and be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon. When “I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me” (Deu 32:41).

Though you be of the troop that overcomes a thousand times, yet you shall be overcome at last, even though you think you are doing service to God, while madly persecuting them. It may aggravate their trial at the time that you pursue them as disturbers of Israel, and such as turn the world upside down. But it shall aggravate your torment, that, under a profession of religion, you were an enemy to religion; that, in the name of God, you fought against God; that you hated and persecuted God’s cause and people; and said, Let the Lord be glorified. What shall become of magistrates that sit upon the throne of God, abusing civil authority, by opposing themselves to the work of God? And what shall we think of ministers, who sit in the temple of God, exalting themselves above the heritage of God, oppressing and scattering them? This anti-Christian spirit is devoted to destruction. Let all wicked sinners who continue in rebellion against God, know that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks. They make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them.

Nine. Hence see matter of comfort to the followers of the Lamb, that cleave to Him, and His name, truth, and cause; for the oppressed cause and heritage of God shall get up their head, however long they be run down. “The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous” (Psa 125:3). The poor believing soul may be crying, Oh! I am overcome; overcome with a troop of lusts, corruptions, temptations, and of enemies within and without. But raise up your head and heart, believer, in the faith of this, that you will overcome at last. Your victory over sin and Satan, death and hell, is secured by the Word and oath of God, the two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, secured by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of your Captain, Jesus Christ. Because He hath overcome, you shall overcome. “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore...and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:18). This can answer all challenges of the adversaries; “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God” (Rom 8:33-34). Victory is secured by God’s covenant with Christ, in Whom it stands fast, and by the love the Father bears to the Son, our Shield. Victory is secured by the indwelling Spirit of Christ: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you...For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:11, 13). It is secured by the earnest of the victory already given. Some gracious experiences are the earnest of the glorious victory: such as grace to hate sin; grace to pray and plead the promise against it; grace to rejoice in Christ, and in the hope of being for ever with Him; grace to hope against hope,

that you shall overcome, because the victory is of the Lord—grace to esteem heaven on this account, because it is a place of perfect victory and freedom from sin.

Victory is secured; but alas! When shall it be? Why, you shall overcome at last; you may be sure of it. At the last extremity: for, “Jehovah-jireh (the LORD will provide)...in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen” At the last battle you may be sure of it; for, “The battle is the LORD’s” (1Sa 17:47). At the last breath, for then your warfare shall be accomplished, and death will bring down the house upon the Philistines, and slay them all. At the last day; for then the victory will be complete, not only over death, which shall be swallowed up in victory, but over the grave: “The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead...shall also quicken your mortal bodies” that soul and body may for ever triumph together in Him, that made them more than conquerors.

Ten. Hence see matter of exhortation and direction; in a word, first to the enemies, and then to the friends of God.

(1) You that are enemies to God and His people. Alas! Sirs, throw down your rebellious arms! We, as ambassadors for Christ would pray you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled unto God. Why will you fight against Him? Who can harden himself against God and prosper? Yea, the tribe of Gad, and the troops that are on their side will gain the day against you and all the legions of hell. Therefore, O come and enlist yourselves with our Captain of salvation. He is a glorious and victorious Captain; “he hath upon his vesture and his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16): the Standard-bearer amongst ten thousands. And, though you have been fighting against Him all your days, to this very moment, by a loose and wicked life of rebellion, yet He is content to take all comers, though rebels; for He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. He is obliged by His office to distribute these gifts amongst the rebellious, to engage them to come to His camp; and this is the money that the Captain is offering you to come out from amongst the troops and tribes of hell, and to come to His side. O come, come to our Lord Jesus Christ! And I promise, in His name, you shall be as welcome as if you never lifted up arms against Him. Come, though you have no money; come without it, for He hath enough; He hath all fullness. Come, though you have nothing, for He hath all. Come, though you be not able to stir, if you be but willing, He will take your hands and help you, saying, Come, give Me your hand, for I am come to take you out of Satan’s service to be soldier. If unwillingness be still the darling you hug, and you are resolved to go on in your rebellion, then His sword is drawn against you. He “shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses” (Psa 68:21), and you perish by your own choice. But, if unwillingness be your foe that you would have conquered, then come to Him, and He will conquer it and make you more than a conqueror at last.

(2) Our next exhortation is to you who have enlisted with this glorious Captain, desiring to fight under His banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh. O Sirs, be encouraged to fight the good fight of faith. Be not discouraged, poor believer, even though a troop of temptations and corruptions shall overcome you. Yet rise and fight by faith and prayer, for you “shall overcome at the last.” Be not discouraged who honestly

espouse the cause of truth and reformation against the corruptions of the day, though opposition should arise from courts and judicatories in greater fury than yet they have done; though the cause may seem to be lost. Yet the cause of truth is the conquering cause, and shall overcome at last. Though a corrupt Church should instigate the state against the witnesses for a reformation-interest, and overcome them, and kill them, as it is said of these in Revelation 11:7, because their testimony torments them that dwell upon the earth—yet He that can give them power to prophecy in sackcloth, can, after three days and a half, make the Spirit of life enter into them, and make a living succession of witnesses, to be as terrible to their enemies as a army with banners. Be not discouraged from duty, you who are amongst the wrestling remnant, even though a troop of foreign enemies should invade and overcome the land, and turn it into a field of blood for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, though the devouring sword should be sent to avenge the quarrel of His covenant. Yet the mourning remnant shall be safe: though a troop should overcome them, they shall overcome at last.

Let me exhort you soldiers of Christ, look to heaven to manage your arms.

First: *fortify your weakest side with the strongest guard*, by watching against the sin that easily besets us.

Second: “*Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*” (2Ti 2:3). The soldier is not well trained for war that cannot endure the hardship of coarse entertainment.⁹

Third: let me exhort you, *keep your eye upon the Captain*, that hath already overcome all your enemies; enter yourselves heir to His victories; “Be strong in the Lord” (Eph 6:10).

Fourth: *fight much upon your knees*, like the Christians that prayed down thunder and lightning upon their enemies. Luther calls prayer, “The gunshot and artillers of the Christians.”

Fifth: *keep close to the Captain and His bands*; do not disjoin the conquering tribe of Gad, that you may be sealed as conquerors at last. For, of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand among the rest in Revelation 7:5.

Sixth: *be not dispirited with the enemies you may meet with*. You may have troops of them defeating you; but, O rise and take courage. For what can hearten a soldier more, than to be sure he shall overcome at last? Fight, therefore, in the faith of the final victory: never lay down your arms, nor give up praying, believing, hoping, and watching, though you should be foiled a thousand times. The Captain’s honor is engaged that you shall overcome at last. Set the troops of heaven against the troops of hell. Know that it is Michael and his angels that fight against the dragon and his angels; therefore, whatever battles you may lose, yet remember what is coming at last. Be not surprised, if, after a communion, a troop overcome you. Lo, He hath warned you it shall be so; but, He hath made victory as sure. “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do

⁹ **entertainment** – supply of needs such as food, drink, and shelter.

unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them” (Joh 16:1-4). Be strong in the faith of everlasting triumph in heaven over all your enemies when the palm of victory will be put in your hands, and the crown of victory on your head. O believer, rise and fight in the faith of complete victory at last: your Captain’s name is *Jehovah-nissi, the Lord your banner*. And therefore, O believer, a troop shall overcome you, but you shall overcome at last!

