

## OVERCOMING BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB AND THE POWER OF OUR TESTIMONY

By Nancy Arant Williams

Do you get nervous thinking about what's going to happen before Jesus returns? It could be cause for alarm if we aren't grounded in the Word of God on the subject.

It could be troubling when we read that in the last days, perilous times will come. But you and I are already on the winning side.

You and I need not fear the things ahead, if we are saved by the blood of the Lamb, empowered by the Spirit of God and dwelling in the secret place.

If those words describe us, we are already IN THE BELOVED, covered by the wing of the angel of the Lord, protected and even emboldened to triumph. To be used by the Lord and to thrive during the last days.

But I have one very serious warning. If you and I have been playing church, not getting serious about the things of God, the time is short to get it right. Just like the ten virgins, we will be required to be ready, anxiously awaiting the bridegroom's appearance. It is possible that we are dressed, but not ready? Playing tiddly winks when we should be paying attention? If that's true, we will be left behind when He comes again. If we are not ready when He comes, we will be ashamed when our deepest longing is to lay our crowns at His feet. Crowns that we didn't earn.

Time is running out. We have an assignment, now, to get ready for what's ahead. It is our honored occupation to submit ourselves, get to know Jesus, to seek the heart of God, adopt His viewpoint and be his shoulders, His hands and His voice.

Time is short for us to be about our Father's business. Are you and I asking Him daily, "What would you have me to do, Lord?"

That is key. Right now, I am seeing Him pour out His spirit wherever men and women are ready to receive all He has to give. And I believe, if our hearts are right and we are open to it, you and I can be instruments of the Most High God, doing signs and wonders, healing the sick and even raising the dead, if we ready ourselves for the flood of the Spirit of God. Not for our glory, but for His.

I believe He is ready to pour out on us **as much as we can handle**. God's delight is to minister, breaking the yoke of bondage, setting the captives free, stirring up the spirit in the brethren, and making us strong so we can overcome no matter what happens next. And most of all, being a light to a sin-darkened world.

Right now, I see Him strengthening me in ways I could never manage myself.

Since childhood, my mother told me that I had very little talent, and one by one, she crossed off the list things that I hoped to do for the Lord. In fact, I was born quite bold, but over time, lost the ability to stand in front of a group of

people without shuddering in fear. As a very small child, she said I had no musical talent, and somehow she got the message across that I was no genius.

But you know what has happened in the past year and a half? I spoke to the Lord, telling Him I didn't care what He did with me as long as He used me. That I would die if He didn't use me. And I'm seeing amazing things happen. The Lord is proving my mother wrong. The Lord is taking my meager talents and multiplying them in amazing ways, but it wouldn't have happened outside the nurturing atmosphere of my church.

I attend a tiny country church in the middle of the beautiful Missouri Ozarks, and I'm going to stick my neck out here and brag on this tiny, but powerful church.

This church, Ozark Tabernacle, situated in the woods, just south of Cole Camp, Missouri, has no fancy building, no big name pastor, but rather a heart after the Lord Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They do not elevate man, but Jesus. They set aside their agendas and seek Him with their whole hearts. And you know what? He's moving there. A tiny spark of flame has lit the roof of the church in the form of the Spirit of God, and I want to fan that flame into a raging fire. I want us as a body to be changed, transformed into the likeness of Jesus, that bride without spot or wrinkle.

It was clear from the beginning in this church, that if God wanted to change the order of the service in any way, He was welcome to do so. After all, it was His service. Right? The interesting thing is, He does so frequently.

In this tiny, humble church, they have given me the freedom to overcome my shyness, let me stumblingly follow the Lord's leading in learning boldness at any cost. They have loved me, encouraged me and been Jesus with skin on to me, when I was hurting from past church abuse, feeling useless to the kingdom of God. They are truly an example of the living breathing Church of Jesus Christ, operating as He intended. And I want to publicly thank them.

I have been in church from the day I was born, became a believer in Jesus at age five and have been watching all my life for evidence that the Spirit of God is moving in the church. And I will say this; most churches I have been in have clearly quenched the Spirit. They have beautiful music, carefully planned worship services, myriad programs, entertainment and even powerful preaching, but the Spirit of God? Nope, not there.

What a sad commentary on our day. In a country where we have had more freedom for a longer time than anywhere else on earth, we have basically given only lip service to Jesus Christ, but denied Him the power to move.

Do you wonder why we see few conversions and almost no signs and wonders here? Why few gifts of the spirit are in evidence? Because we have relegated that kind of Christianity to the past, stripping the Spirit of God of His power to change mankind, simply because it no longer fits our modern day vision of what God *should* do.

God cannot be stuffed in a tiny box. He cannot be dictated to. When those things happen, He simply leaves like the gentleman He is.

And our churches, as a result, have Ichabod written over the doors. Remember what the word means? It means, "The Lord has departed."

What a horrendous pronouncement. Equal to a curse.

I don't want to be where the Spirit of the Lord is stifled. Do you?

When the Lord pours out His spirit, I want to be standing under the flood, filling up and spilling over with the life-giving truth of God.

Most of us, as churches and individuals, have put up a big red STOP sign toward God, saying, "This is as far as you go, God. The rest of this is ours to manage. We will sing your praises, and bless you with our lips, but our hearts—well, they're ours and we yearn in another direction."

And you know what the scripture says about that, don't you? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Our hearts will lead us astray if we aren't completely sold out to Jesus.

If our hearts aren't totally sold out to Him, we are fooling no one but ourselves. Most of us, if we're honest, will have to admit we have been playing church, playing 'Ring Around the Rosy', at the foot of the cross. Scripture in Revelation three describes the church of Laodicea in this same way.

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise your to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourselves, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me. He who overcomes I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Does the description of the church at Laodicea ring any bells? We, my friends, in our country, are rich and lazy and content and think it will remain this way. But that is deception. Soon will come a time when judgement will fall on the earth for the abominations that have run rampant since the time of Sodom and Gomorrah.

If you and I are honest, we'll have to admit things are worse now than they were then. And what did God do with those two wicked cities?

Right. He judged them, burning them to the ground so not one stone stood upon another.

You and I must make a choice now, while there is still time. Do we want to be counted among the remnant, like that church of Philadelphia? The only one of the seven churches of whom God could be proud?

Here's His promise to Philadelphia. (Rev. 3: 10)—"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of testing, that

hour which is about to come upon the whole earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one takes your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it any more, and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.”

You and I are at a crossroads. Many of us have claimed the name of Jesus for years. We sing the songs and quote the verses. And yet, just like the church of Ephesus, (Rev. 2: 1) which did *everything* else right, we have lost our passionate first love. We failed to hold onto the fire of God, and somewhere exchanged it for smoke and mirrors.

If we want to be victorious in the last days, we need to stop straddling the fence. We need to be bold, putting on the armor of God. We need to stop hiding our lights under a bushel. We need to shout from the housetops that Jesus is Lord. Then we need to get about the Father’s business, making ourselves available for use by the Master Designer. We need to be drenching ourselves in the Word, catching hold of the fire of God and watching how He will use us. Only then will we have crowns to lay at His wonderful feet.

My challenge is this—to examine our hearts and see which of the seven churches we emulate. Then choose where we want to be counted.

It’s up to us and the time is now.

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