

## CHAPTER FOUR

### OVERCOMING DEATH

The experience of overcoming death is not rare among the saints. By the blood of the lamb, the Israelites were delivered from the hand of the angel who smote the firstborn of Egypt. David was delivered from the paws of the lion and the bear and also from the hand of Goliath. Elisha once cast meal into a pot to get rid of a fatal poison (2 Kings 4:38-41). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were not hurt in the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3:16-27). Daniel saw God shutting the lions' mouth when he was cast into their den (6:21-23). Paul once shook off a viper into the fire without being hurt (Acts 28:3-5). Enoch and Elijah were both raptured into heaven without tasting death—even more excellent examples of overcoming death.

God's intention is to lead His children into the experience of overcoming death. To overcome sin, the self, the world, and Satan is very crucial; but our victory still is not complete if we fail to overcome death. If we want to have a complete victory, we must overcome "death, the last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26). We leave one enemy undefeated if we do not experience overcoming death.

There is death in the natural world, death within us, and death that originates from Satan. The earth is under a curse, and every creature is under the ruling of this curse. If we want to live with constant victory in this world, we have to overcome the death in this world. Moreover, death is in our body. On the day we were born, death was already operating in us. And who among us, having been born, is not now going toward the grave? We should not think of death merely as a "gate"; we should know that death is a process. Death is already in us, and it is gradually and continually eating us up. The final breaking away from our physical body is simply the work of death at its climax. Death can attack our spirit to make it short of life and power; it can attack our soul to make it confused and devoid of feeling, thought, and opinion; or it can attack our body to make it weak and sick.

Romans 5 says that "death reigned" (v. 17a). This is not only death; it is the reign of death. This reigning of death exists in the spirit, soul, and body. Although our body is not dead yet, death already reigns in it. Although the power of death has not reached its climax, it is already reigning and expanding its territory in the entire body. The various sicknesses that we find in our body show how much the power of death is in us. All of these lead us to the end of our human life.

In addition to this reign of death, there is also the reign of life (v. 17b). The apostle said that whosoever receives the gift of righteousness by Jesus Christ "will reign in life," a reigning that far surpasses the power of the operation of death. Because believers today put so much emphasis on the matter of sin, they forget the problem of death. Overcoming sin is crucial, but we must not neglect the overcoming of death—the two complement each another. Romans 5 through 8 deals most clearly with the matter of overcoming sin, but this passage gives equal attention to the matter of overcoming death: "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). The apostle stresses not only sin itself but also the result of sin. He not only shows that righteousness is versus sin but also that life is versus death. Many believers concern themselves only with overcoming various manifestations of sin in their daily life and character, yet they neglect overcoming death, which is the result of sin. But God does not say much through the apostle in these chapters regarding the various manifestations of sin in daily living; He rather stresses very much the result of sin—death.

We must see clearly the relationship between sin and death. Christ died to deliver us not only from sin but also from death. God is calling us to overcome both. As sinners we were originally dead in sin, and sin and death reigned (as kings) in us. Because the Lord Jesus died for us, our sin and death were swallowed up by His death. Death was originally the king in us. Since we have been baptized into His death, however, we are not only dead unto sin; we are also able to receive life and live unto God (6:11). We are joined unto Christ; therefore, as "death lords it over Him no more" (v. 9), so neither can it bind us anymore (v. 14). The salvation of Christ replaces sin with righteousness and death with life. If we read this passage of the Bible carefully, we shall see that these are the main points of the apostle. If we receive only half, surely we will not be complete. When the apostle speaks of the completeness of the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death" (8:2). We may have much experience of overcoming sin, but how much have we experienced overcoming death?

Because God's uncreated life entered into our spirit when we believed in the Lord and were regenerated, we have some experience in overcoming death. But is this the only experience that we can possibly have? To what extent can life overcome death? One thing is certain: most of today's believers have not experienced the overcoming of death to the degree that God has purposed. We must admit that death operates in us in a stronger way than does life. Therefore, we should pay equal attention to both sin and death in the same way that God does. We must overcome death in the same way that we overcome sin.

Since Christ has overcome death, believers need not feel that they must die, although they still may die. Similarly, since Christ has condemned sin in the flesh, believers no longer must sin, although they still may sin. Since it is a believer's goal to be free from sin, it should also be his goal to be free from death. A believer should understand that as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, his relationship with death is the same as his relationship with sin. He has overcome these completely in Christ; therefore, God is now calling him to overcome them in his experience. We think that since Christ has overcome death for us we do not have to do anything. But if this were the case, we would not be able to testify to the Lord's victory experientially. Without Golgotha, we would have no ground for victory. But passively waiting for nature to take its own course is not the way to overcome either. We do not overcome sin this way; neither do we overcome death this way. God desires that we take the matter of overcoming death as a reality; that is, by the death of Christ, we overcome the death in us practically. We have overcome many temptations, the flesh, the world, and Satan; now we should rise up to defeat the power of death.

Since we must resist death in the same way that we resist sin, our attitude toward death should be totally changed. Because death is the common heritage of fallen man, we naturally tend to be submissive to it. Believers have not learned to resist death. All mankind is inclined toward the grave. Although we know that the Lord's second coming is very close and that not everyone will die because of the rapture, in our daily experience most of us are still waiting for death. When the righteousness of God operates in us, we spontaneously hate sin; but we have not allowed God's life to work in us so that we would also hate death.

To overcome death a believer must change his attitude from one of submission to one of resistance. Unless a believer rids himself of such passivity, he will never overcome death but will instead constantly be harassed by it and end up among the graves of those who

die prematurely. Most believers mistake passivity for faith. They think that they have committed everything to God. If they should not die, He will definitely rescue them from it; if they should die, nothing can stop God from letting them. They simply consent to God's will being done in everything. Such an attitude sounds good, but is this faith? It is simply a lazy passivity. When we do not know God's will, we should say, as the Lord did, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). This does not mean that we do not have to cry out to God specifically, making our requests known to Him. We should not yield passively to death; God wants us to work together actively with His will. Unless we know for sure that God wants us to die, we should not passively allow death to suppress us. Rather, we should actively work together with God's will to resist and reject it.

We do not have such a passive attitude toward sin, so why should we have such an attitude toward death? The Bible considers death as our enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Therefore, we should be resolute in fighting and overcoming it. Since the Lord Jesus has met and overcome death for us, He wants every one of us to overcome it in our present life. We should not ask God to grant us strength to bear the power of death; we should ask instead for the strength to overcome its authority.

Because death comes from sin, our deliverance from death is based upon the fact that the Lord Jesus has died for us and saved us from sin. His redemption is deeply related to death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil, and might release those who because of the fear of death through all their life were held in slavery." The cross is the basis for overcoming death.

Satan has the power of death. He holds this power because he has sin as his basis: "Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). But the Lord Jesus Himself entered into the realm of death and through His redemption abolished its sting—sin—so that Satan has lost his power. Through Christ's death, sin has not only lost its effect, but death has also lost its power. Therefore, we must now break through the power of death by the death of Christ and appropriate all that has been accomplished at Golgotha so that our whole being can be delivered from the siege of death.

There are three ways for believers to overcome death: (1) by believing that they will not die before their work is completed; (2) by believing that the sting of death has been removed, so that even if they die, there is nothing to be afraid of; and (3) by believing that they will be totally delivered from death because of the Lord's second coming and rapture. Let us now look at these one by one.

## **DEATH AFTER THE COMPLETION OF OUR WORK**

Unless a believer is clear that his work is finished and that the Lord does not need him to remain on the earth any longer, he should not die; that is, he should always resist death. If the symptoms of death have gradually occurred in his body and he knows that his work has not been finished, a believer should completely deny these symptoms and refuse to die. He also should believe that the Lord will carry through his resistance because He still has work for him to do. Therefore, if we have not finished the work assigned to us, we can be calm and still believe even though our body may be beset with

danger. As long as we work and fight together with the Lord, He will definitely work to swallow up our death with His life.

The Lord Jesus withstood death. When people wanted to cast Him down the edge of a hill, "He, passing through their midst, went away" (Luke 4:29-30). At another time "Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him" (John 7:1). Yet another time, the crowd "picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple" (8:59). He resisted death again and again because His time had not yet come. He knew there was a definite time for the Messiah to be cut off; He could not die ahead of the time God had appointed, nor could He die at any place other than Golgotha. We also must not die before our time.

The apostle Paul also had many experiences of withstanding death. The powers of darkness wanted him to die ahead of time, but he overcame them one after another. Once when imprisoned and very much in danger, he said, "But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose. But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue" (Phil. 1:22-25). He was not afraid of death; because the work was not finished, he trusted in God, knowing that he would not die. This was his overcoming of death. Afterwards, when he knew that he had "fought the good fight...finished the course...kept the faith," he concluded that "the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). When we know that we have not finished our course, we must not die.

Not only was Paul this way; Peter was the same. He knew when he would leave the world. "Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me" (2 Pet. 1:14). It is a mistake for us to think that our death is imminent merely because of the condition of our environment or our health, without any clear indication from the Lord. Just as we live to the Lord, we die to the Lord. Therefore, we must withstand any calling of death that is not from the Lord.

In reading the Old Testament we see that all the forefathers died "full of days." What does it mean to be "full of days"? It means that they fully lived the days God had appointed them. God has allotted a special number of years (Josh. 21) to each one of us. If we do not live to that time, we have not overcome death. But how do we know how many years God has appointed us? The Bible gives us a general number: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; /and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years" (Psa. 90:10). We do not mean that everyone must live to be at least seventy years old; God's sovereignty cannot be infringed upon by man. But if we do not receive a clear indication of a shorter time, we should take this number as a standard and resist any death that would come sooner. By standing upon the Word of God we will see that victory is ours.

## **DEATH WITHOUT FEAR**

Based on what we have said about overcoming death, we do not necessarily mean that our body will never die. Although we believe that "we will not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51), saying that we will not die is too superstitious. Since the Bible takes seventy as a general standard for human life, we can hope to live until that time if we have faith. But we should never think that we are immortal because we have the Lord Jesus as life. Moreover, we know that God often allows exceptions; some die before seventy. Our faith

can only ask God that we would not pass away before our work is done. Whether we live briefly or for a long time, we should not perish like sinners before half of our days are over. Our days should be long enough to finish our work in this life. Then when the end does come, we can depart from the earth in peace by the grace of God, in a way that is as natural as the falling of a ripe melon. Job described this kind of death as "a shock of corn cometh in in his season" (5:26).

Overcoming death does not necessarily mean escaping death, because God may want some people to overcome it in resurrection just as the Lord Jesus did. But even though a believer passes through death, like the Lord Jesus, he does not have to fear death. A believer who strives to overcome death simply because he fears and abhors death is already defeated. How can he expect to overcome? The Lord may decide to completely save us from death by rapturing us alive to the heavens; but we should not ask the Lord to come back soon out of our fear of death. Such a fear is a symptom that we are already defeated by death. Even if we die, death is just like walking from one room to another. There is no need for any traumatic pain, anxiety, or fear.

Originally, we were men who "because of the fear of death through all their life were held in slavery" (Heb. 2:15). But the Lord Jesus has "released" us so that we do not have to fear it anymore. Its pain, darkness, and loneliness cannot scare us. An apostle who experienced overcoming death told us, "For to me...to die is gain...having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better" (Phil. 1:21, 23). Here is an attitude that sees no trace of fear. This is true victory over death.

## **RAPTURED ALIVE**

To be raptured alive is the last way to overcome death. When the Lord Jesus comes back, many believers will be raptured alive. Both 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 teach this. There is no definite day for the Lord's second coming. He could have come back at any moment during the past two thousand years. Believers have the hope of being raptured alive at any time without passing through death. The time of the Lord Jesus' second coming is now closer than before. Therefore, believers today have more hope of being raptured than those in past generations. We do not want to say much here, but we can safely say a few words with assurance: if the Lord Jesus comes back while our generation is still here, would we not be raptured alive? If so, we should overcome death, not allowing ourselves to die ahead of time so that we may be raptured alive. According to the prophecy in the Bible, there will eventually be a group of believers who will be raptured without passing through death. Their being raptured alive is a kind of overcoming of death. As long as we live on the earth, we should not say that we may not be those people. Therefore, should we not prepare ourselves to overcome death completely?

Believing that we will never die physically is not a superstition, because the Bible gives us this hope. We may die, but it is not a must that we die. The Lord clearly teaches us: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:54). But He also says, "This is the bread which came down out of heaven, not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread shall live forever" (v. 58). He means that among His believers some will die and be resurrected, while others will not pass through death at all.

The Lord Jesus expressed this idea more explicitly at the time of Lazarus's death: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

and every one who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever" (John 11:25-26). The Lord Jesus is not only the resurrection but also the life. Most of us believe that He is the resurrection but forget that He is also the life. We only know that after we die He will resurrect us, but we forget that while we are living He wants to be our life to save us from dying. The Lord Jesus told us of these two kinds of work, but we only believe in one of them. He said, "He who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live." This is what believers of the past two thousand years are going to experience. But He also said that there will be a group of people who "lives and believes into Me," who will "by no means die forever." We do not know how many thousands have believed in God and have already passed away, but God's Word says that some will "by no means die forever"—not that some will be resurrected, but that some will "by no means die forever." We have no reason to say that we must first die and then be resurrected. Since the second coming of the Lord Jesus is already near, why should we have to die before then and wait for resurrection? Why not look to Him to rapture us at His second coming so that we may be totally delivered from the power of death?

The Lord tells us that not only is He the resurrection to many, but also the life to some. Although it is marvelous to be resurrected from the dead as Lazarus was, this does not mean that there is no other way to overcome death other than resurrection. The Lord said that there is another way to "by no means die forever." Originally, we were appointed to fall into the gloomy valley of death, but God has built a "pontoon bridge" for us to get to the heavens directly. This pontoon bridge is the rapture.

If some wish to be raptured and if the time of rapture is indeed near, then God would desire that we learn how to overcome death and be among the number who will be raptured alive. Before rapture, the last enemy to overcome is death. On the cross the Lord Jesus fully overcame death, but God desires that the church would experience His victory. We all feel that we are at the end of this age and that before our rapture the Holy Spirit is now leading us to wage the last battle against death.

Satan knows that his time is short. He is trying his best to frustrate the believers from being raptured. As a result, the children of God today experience many physical attacks. Because of such frequent physical attacks, they become accustomed to breathing in the atmosphere of death and lose the hope of being raptured alive. Believers do not know that this is just the challenge of the enemy to frustrate them from being raptured. When a believer has truly received the calling of rapture, he will spontaneously develop a fighting spirit against death; in his spirit he will feel that death is a frustration to his rapture that must be overcome.

The devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). His job is to murder. The goal of all that Satan does to the believers is to cause them to die. In the end time he deals with God's children in a special way: he wears them out (Dan. 7:25). If he can add a little anxiety to a believer's spirit, put a little more fear and worry in his mind, give him insomnia one night, and cause him to eat less and become overworked at other times, he has succeeded in bringing in an invasion of death. Although a drop of water is powerless, a repeated dripping over a period of time can wear away a stone. Knowing this, Satan uses little worries, anxieties, and neglect to wear out the saints.

At other times Satan directly attacks believers and causes them to die. Actually, many such attacks have happened, but believers do not recognize them as such. Sometimes the attack comes simply as a cold, sunstroke, insomnia, fatigue, or loss of appetite. Sometimes it may be uncleanness, anger, envyings, or indulgence. Not knowing the



deadening significance behind these, believers lack perfect victory. If they recognized these deadening attacks and withstood them just as they withstand death, they would overcome. Because the believers do not have sufficient knowledge to understand the real meaning of these experiences, they attribute them to their age or other factors, not realizing that the enemy is using death to attack them because the rapture is close.

The Lord Jesus is coming back soon; therefore, we should wage a full-scale battle against death. In the same way that we fight with sin, the world, and Satan, we should also fight against death. We should not only strive to overcome; we should also lay hold of victory. In every aspect we should firmly grasp the work of Christ in overcoming death. If we look back on our past experience and ask God to shine upon us, we will see the numerous times that we have been attacked by death without realizing it. We considered these attacks to be something else and, in so doing, failed to have the power to deal with them. If we had identified these as the attacks of death, God would have supplied us with the power to overcome them experientially. We often seem to pass over broken bridges and through torn-up streets; it seems as if our environment and everything else tell us that we are about to die, but we cannot die. We often even despair of life, but we cannot die. Why should we die now? Recently the children of God have had considerable experiences of fighting for their life. It is most painful, yet they feel that they cannot die. It seems as if they are saying that they do not want to die. What does this mean? These are the attacks of death to prevent us from being raptured. God is leading us to pitch our last battle against death before our rapture.

Today we should apply the victory of Christ to shut the door of Hades. We should stand up and refuse to let death have any power over us. Reject everything that has the element of death in it. Apply this view to every sickness, weakness, and pain. Sometimes the body may not feel anything, but death has already done its work. All vexing in the spirit and sorrow in the soul result in death. God is now calling us to be raptured; therefore, everything that frustrates this rapture should be destroyed.

God is putting His children in different environments that strip them of their strength and all that they depend on, causing them to place their lives into His hand and hang on by a thread of faith. Otherwise, they would have no hope of survival. At such times there seems to be no way except to cry, "Lord, keep me alive." The battle today is truly a battle of life and death.

The evil spirits of murder are working everywhere today. Unless the believers stand against them and pray, they will fail. If you are still as passive as before, you will certainly die. You may say, "Lord, make me overcome death." But the Lord will say, "If you stand against death, I will make you overcome death." Prayer alone will not work very well if the will does not resist death. You should say, "Lord, because You have overcome death, I now reject all the attacks of death. I am determined to overcome right now. Lord, grant me a victory over death." The Lord desires that you would overcome death. Grasp the promise that God has given you, pray to be delivered from death, and believe that nothing can hurt you. Do not accept the fact that death can touch you. For example, if you are in a disease-infected area, reject the diseases and forbid them to come close to you. Do not let death attack you through disease.

We should not wait passively for the second coming and presume that somehow we will be raptured. We must be prepared. Being raptured, just like any other matter, requires God's church to cooperate with Him. Faith never lets things take their own course. Death must be resisted with determination. Likewise, the rapture is something that

must be grasped with determination. Faith is indispensable, but that does not mean we may passively abandon responsibility. If we theoretically consent to the fact that we can be completely freed from death, but yield passively to its power, what profit is this?

## **A SIN UNTO DEATH**

The Bible tells us that there is a kind of sin called "a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) which believers may commit. The "death" mentioned here is not spiritual death because God's eternal life will never die. Neither is it "the second death" because the Lord's sheep will never perish. This "death" is physical death.

We need to specifically look at this "sin unto death" so that we who wait for the rapture will know how to be careful, lest our flesh be corrupted through committing such a sin, and lest we lose the blessing of being raptured alive. If the Lord delays His coming and we have to pass through the grave, our deliverance from this sin will keep us alive until we are "full of days" so that we may work for the Lord before passing away. Because of their neglect, some of God's children have had their days on the earth shortened and their crowns lost. Many workers might still be working for the Lord today had they paid attention to this matter.

The Bible does not tell us explicitly what kind of sin the sin unto death is, but it is certain that such a sin does exist. According to the record in the Bible concerning the believers' experiences, we know that this sin varies among people. To some, a certain sin may be a sin unto death, but to another it may not and vice versa. This is because of differences in the grace received, the light obtained, and the position taken by each believer.

Even though the Bible does not say what kind of sin this sin is, we know that anyone who dies from committing a sin has committed a "sin unto death." The children of Israel committed such a sin at Kadesh (Num. 13:25—14:12). Although they had tempted the Lord ten times before (14:22), He tolerated it. But this time He caused their bodies to fall in the wilderness, even though He forgave them for the sin of refusing to enter Canaan (v. 32).

Because he spoke unadvisedly with his lips by the waters of Meribah (Psa. 106:33), Moses died outside the land of Canaan. He was not allowed to enter into the land. This was his "sin unto death." Aaron committed the same sin as Moses, and he also did not get into the holy land (Num. 20:24). The man of God who journeyed from Judah to Bethel committed a sin unto death simply because he disobeyed God's commandment concerning eating (1 Kings 13:21-22). In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were punished with death because they also committed a sin unto death; they kept back part of the proceeds of their land and lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). The believer in Corinth who had his stepmother also committed a sin unto death; therefore, the apostle said that he would "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5). The Word says that many Corinthian believers slept because they were "guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (11:27, 30). They also committed a sin unto death.

To overcome death we should continually overcome sin because death comes from sin. If we want to live until we are full of days or until the Lord comes back, we should be careful not to sin. Many believers who were not careful in this went to the grave before their time. This does not mean that they committed a particularly frightening sin; the sin we talk of here is not the same for everyone. The fornication of the Corinthians was considered a sin unto death, but the unadvised words that Moses spoke were considered



a sin unto death as well, for we are told that Moses was "very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Therefore, we cannot overlook any sin.

Today is the age of grace and God is full of grace; therefore, we can be at peace. Do not let Satan accuse you, suggesting that you have committed this type of sin and must die. Although the Bible does not tell us to pray for others who commit this type of sin, God will forgive us if we examine ourselves and repent. Many believe that the person recorded in 2 Corinthians 2:6-7 was the one who had his stepmother. First Corinthians 11:30-32 also tells us that even though we may have committed a sin unto death, we can still be freed if we are willing to judge ourselves. Therefore, we should never tolerate any sin lest it become our sin unto death. Our flesh may be weak, but we should never lose a heart of self-judgment. We should judge our own sin and never tolerate it. In this life it is impossible to reach sinless perfection, but frequent confession and dependence upon God's grace are indispensable. God still forgives us. Those who want to overcome death should pay extra attention to this. "Then he showeth them their work,/and their transgressions that they have exceeded./He openeth also their ear to discipline,/and commandeth that they return from iniquity./If they obey and serve him,/they shall spend their days in prosperity,/and their years in pleasures./But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword,/and they shall die without knowledge. /But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath:/they cry not when he bindeth them./They die in youth,/and their life is among the unclean" (Job 36:9-14).

## **THE TEACHINGS IN PROVERBS**

Proverbs is a book that deals with the believers' daily walk. It teaches much on how they can preserve their lives. Let us take a closer look so that we may know the way to overcome death.

"My son, forget not my law;/but let thine heart keep my commandments:/for length of days, and long life,/and peace, shall they add to thee" (3:1-2).

"It shall be health to thy navel,/and marrow to thy bones" (3:8).

"Let thine heart retain my words:/keep my commandments, and live" (4:4).

"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;/and the years of thy life shall be many" (4:10).

"Take fast hold of instruction;/let her not go:/keep her; for she is thy life" (4:13).

"For they [my words] are life unto those that find them, /and health to all their flesh" (4:22).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence;/for out of it are the issues of life" (4:23).

"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding:/he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (6:32).

"For whoso findeth me [wisdom] findeth life,/and shall obtain favor of the Lord" (8:35).

"For by me [wisdom] thy days shall be multiplied,/and the years of thy life shall be increased" (9:11).

"But righteousness delivereth from death" (10:2).

"The fear of the Lord prolongeth days:/but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (10:27).

"In the way of righteousness is life;/and in the pathway thereof there is no death" (12:28).

"The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,/to depart from the snares of death" (14:27).

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh:/but envy the rottenness of the bones" (14:30).

"The way of life is above to the wise,/that he may depart from hell beneath" (15:24).

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul" (15:32).

"In the light of the king's countenance is life" (16:15).

"He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul" (16:17).

"He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; /but he that despiseth his ways shall die" (19:16).

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life" (19:23).

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue/is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (21:6).

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding /shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (21:16).

"He that followeth after righteousness and mercy/findeth life" (21:21).

When the Holy Spirit of God leads us to overcome death, we will find new meaning to these verses. We are accustomed to thinking that life is merely a term. But after receiving enlightenment, the life of our physical body will definitely be lengthened if we truly fulfill God's conditions. Therefore, we have to pay close attention to the verses above. If we do not follow their precepts, we will see our life gradually leak away. For instance, God's promise says, "Honor your father and mother...that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). If we disobey this, we will see our days shortened by sins. God wants us to obey His words, receive wisdom, pursue righteousness, and preserve our hearts. (The mind of the heart has much to do with life.) In this way, we will not lose life. If we want to gain life, we must obey.

## **THE POWERS OF THE AGE TO COME**

In the coming kingdom the Lord Jesus will be the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). At that time no inhabitant will say, "I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). Believers will see that "this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality." And "then the word which is written will come to pass, `Death has been swallowed up unto victory'" (1 Cor. 15:54). The characteristics of the kingdom age

for believers are freedom from weakness, sickness, and death, the redemption of the body, and having Satan under our feet.

However, the Bible tells us that we can now have a foretaste of "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5). Although our body is not yet redeemed, we can taste by faith the powers of the coming age in having no weakness, sickness, or death. This is a very deep experience, but if a believer fulfills God's conditions and believes God's words with his whole heart, he will see that this kind of experience is possible. Faith transcends time; it can appropriate both what God has accomplished for us in the past and what He will accomplish for us in the future.

In 2 Corinthians 5 the apostle speaks of the future transfiguration of the body: "For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has wrought us for this very thing is God, who has given to us the Spirit as a pledge" (vv. 4-5). The word "pledge" means "down payment," which is a partial payment guaranteeing full payment in the future. The Holy Spirit in us is God's pledge "that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." Although we have not experienced this completely, we can experience part of it because we have the down payment of the Holy Spirit. The granting of the Holy Spirit is for our foretaste of the coming victory of life.

The apostle speaks clearly in 2 Timothy 1: "Our Savior Christ Jesus, who nullified death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel" (v. 10). Life and immortality are the common possession of everyone who receives the gospel. The question now is: how much has the Holy Spirit led the believers to experience this possession? Death has been abolished; believers have experienced this to a certain degree. But now this age is coming to an end, and with the hope of imminent rapture, the Holy Spirit is urging believers to experience more of the inheritance which they received from the gospel.

It is possible to have a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. When the apostle says, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57), he is referring to the present and specifically to the problem of death. He is speaking about overcoming death in the future. However, he does not think that the experience of overcoming death is entirely for the future. He says that we can overcome through the Lord Jesus now.

God has a principle: whatever He intends to do in the age, He first does in a group of people. What everyone will experience in the millennium, the members of Christ should first experience on the earth today. In past ages there were always some who tasted the powers of the coming age; therefore, the church today should have much more experience of Christ's victory over death. God wants us to break through the realm of Hades today. The Lord wants us to overcome death for the sake of His Body. If we have not overcome death, our battle is not yet complete.

Each of us should now seek the Lord's mind concerning our future. (We do not superstitiously believe that we will not die.) But if this is the end time and Christ's second coming will be delayed no longer, occurring even while we are still alive, we should lay hold of God's word by faith and believe that we will not die but will remain alive to see the Lord's face. Because of such a hope, we should purify ourselves even as He is pure. We should live for Him moment by moment and apply His resurrection life for the needs of our spirit, soul, and body.

"By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death" (Heb. 11:5). May we also have faith to believe that we will not die. May we believe that victory over death is a reality, that the rapture is definite, and that the time will not be long. "For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God." What about us?

Oh, how excellent is the glory to come! Oh, how complete is the salvation God has given us! Now is the time for us to rise and go up. Oh, may "heaven" so saturate us that the flesh has no more ground and the world poses no more distraction. Oh, may the love of the Father be so much in us that we have nothing more to do with His enemy! Oh, may the Lord Jesus so satisfy our hearts that we desire nothing else besides Him! Oh, may the Holy Spirit create in every believer a prayer that cries, "Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
This is the pathway the Father has lately shown.  
The Holy Spirit has this clearly taught,  
That we may turn from the world to the throne.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
Oh what glory, we will return to our heavenly place!  
In the twinkling of an eye we will be fully changed,  
And will be raptured to see Him face to face!

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
Such promise is true and faithful indeed.  
Though we know not the day or the hour,  
We feel that the time is drawing close.

You will not die, therefore be sanctified,  
Cut off all ties with all sins,  
The world soon passes away, and heaven's glory will appear,  
May we pass our days in godliness.

You will be raptured to see the Lord in the air!  
Therefore keep your spirit from all earthly defilements,  
We are not waiting to die here,  
But are looking moment by moment to be raptured from this world.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
Advance therefore until the day breaks.  
Hold fast, that no one takes away your crown,  
For soon, the Lord will reward you with the throne.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
God's children, what victory this is!  
Your spirit should say, "Come Lord!  
Come quickly, and be with us forever."