

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God's Message to Seven Churches: Philadelphia: Blessed Overcoming

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:12, KJV 1900)

In every area of life, we face great challenges, and we make decisions regarding how to meet them. In serving God in His church, our final test of acceptable and God-glorifying service rests with Him, not with our peers. He tests both our actions and our motives. He alone knows and can put our true motives to His righteous test. We may reasonably judge people's behavior based on the teachings of Scripture, but we cannot as accurately judge their motives. Their attitudes and actions may indicate a certain motive, but we cannot know for sure that our assessment is correct. Not so with God; He knows every finite particle of everything about us, and He is always correct in His judgment of both our actions and our motives.

Our study verse addresses an outcome, overcoming, that requires both a right action and a right motive. The promotion that results in the verse comes from the Lord, but the benefits of that blessing flow to the people in the church where such a noble and faithful "Overcomer" serves. The verse floods us with instructive truth. Consider.

1. By the Holy Spirit's leading, John refers to the Philadelphia Church as "...the temple of my God..." Throughout the New Testament, inspired writers refer to a New Testament church through the analogy of a building. A temple, however, is a very specialized building that is constructed for one use, the worship of God. Over a year ago, we began this study of the New Testament church with First Timothy 3:15, a verse in which Paul refers to "...the **house** of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Any "House" is designed and constructed for a specific purpose or use. In many circles of contemporary Christianity, the topic of what the New Testament teaches regarding what a faithful church should be, should believe, and should do, has been all but forsaken. I have talked with a few men who are so bold—and Biblically ignorant—as to claim that the New Testament has little or nothing to say about the operation of a New Testament church. Just do

whatever you do sincerely, and God will rubber stamp your choices. When I hear this sentiment, I want to ask the person, "Which Bible do you read?" **They are definitely not reading my King James Bible.** Paul made the point in First Timothy 3:15, but he devoted almost the whole of First Timothy to detailed instructions that Timothy would have to guide his godly behavior in the church. The word "**Behave**" demands a set pattern to be followed, a rule that measures both good behavior and bad. Every New Testament letter originated at the Holy Spirit's instruction to confront a behavioral or belief problem in a church or group of churches, and we discover the Lord's specific instructions in them if we read with our hearts and minds open to the teachings of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and not in our own creativity wholly apart from Scripture. One must consciously choose to ignore most of the New Testament to conclude that it says nothing regarding how a New Testament church should behave.

2. ...*will I make a pillar...* Think of an ancient Greek or Roman temple. The massive pillars held up the superstructure of the building and gave it integrity against the onslaughts of time and erosion. A pillar is solid, in many cases constructed of marble or some other hard stone. Many ancient ruins still show us the pillars, even after most of the other components of the temples have vanished. The idea of a pillar in the Lord's church forbids shifting ideas based on the latest "Politically correct" ways of thinking and doing things. A pillar is fixed and secure. How many New Testament passages command the faithful in the Lord's "House" to be "Steadfast"? That is a pillar. Pillars are not fancifully entertaining. You don't observe a pillar at work and think you've been to the latest pyramid sales seminar. But, if you are looking for reliable, "Steadfast" support, you can't beat a pillar for your need.

3. *...he shall go no more out.* A pillar remains fixed and reliable. Having spent over fifty-five years in ministry, I have seen a lot of men come and go in the ministry. When you meet a man and build respect in him, his unexpected shift is always disappointing. I am always shocked to see the mindset of the shifting sand preacher. He apparently thinks that you merely listen to what he tells you without ever thinking or studying the Bible for yourself. And he is stunned when you tell him that you haven't changed your understanding of what the Bible teaches, so you cannot and will not follow his revisionist theology. The godly "Pillar" in a church is reliable. If you find him today with his anchor set in bedrock Bible truth, most likely that is right where you'll find him the next time you meet up with him, and that is as it should be.
4. *...I will write upon him the name of my God...* The pillar does not build his or her personal reputation or ponder the legacy that he shall leave. A pillar fills an assigned role that is more important than the pillar itself. That role is the pillar's mission, and the faithful pillar will work to ensure that he/she has honored this godly assignment.
5. *...and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God...* "Bigger than life," "Bigger than self," steadfast and faithful service to God is wholly immersed in the pillar's work, not in how to play politically correct games with the people around us or with our own service in the church. The New Testament frequently uses the "Name" of God or of the Lord Jesus Christ in various settings. The intent of this term appeals to authority. When we do something in His name, we are acting on His specific direction and authority. But, if He never bothered to tell us anything about what we should do or how we should do it, there is no reason to do things in "His name." We can just do what we wish in our own name and expect Him to follow along. This "Name" came down out of heaven from "...my God." It is unconscionable for folks who claim to believe in the Bible to read such passages and continue to claim that their Bible tells them nothing about what to do or how to do it in their church. Ah, perhaps this last term uncovers the problem. They have ceased regarding the church as the Lord's temple, and they increasingly consider it to be "My church." I wonder. What does the Lord think about such an attitude?
6. *...and I will write upon him my new name.* We are back to His name, His authority. The faithful pillar seeks only His name, His

direction and authority for its work. **Pillars aren't interested in self-promotion.** An Old Testament passage serves up a rich warning. In a parable, all the trees got together and decided that they needed a leader to rule over them. Their first choice was unselfish, fruit-bearing trees, but all of those worthy trees refused. They knew that growing the fruit that God had enabled them to grow was a full-time job. They couldn't rule over other trees and still bear fruit to the honor of their God, so they refused. Eventually, the trees decided to compromise and asked the bramble bush to rule over them. The prickly bramble was all too happy to rule, but he demanded blind submission. (Judges 9)

7. The name of honor in our study passage "...cometh down out of heaven from God." "...cometh..." is a present tense verb. It came down in the past, comes down now, and shall continue to come down in the future. Blessings on steadfast pillars come from God. When God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle of worship, He commanded Moses to follow the pattern that God showed Him in Mt. Sinai. Moses only had God's blessings on work that followed the divine pattern. Our study of the New Testament teaches us that the God who cared enough to frame the prophetic pattern of Old Testament worship has cared enough to do no less—in fact, more—for His greater New Testament form of worship.
8. *...and I will write upon him my new name.* Keep your thought on the significance of "Name." Identity and authority are integral to this term in the New Testament. We don't write His name on ourselves. He writes it, but He only writes it on those whom He judges to be faithful pillars in His church. Scripture abounds with examples, as does life, to the observant and faithful, of this truth. When a man chooses personal promotion, God demotes, and the man slips away into obscurity. When a man chooses faithful service to the Lord, he isn't interested in promotion. His goal—his only goal—is to honor God by serving God's children. As the honorable pillar serves faithfully, the Lord will promote him to greater use in His kingdom.

Folks, we serve in God's "House," and God hasn't left the management of His "House" to our private ingenuity or whims. We stand or fall, we survive against all natural odds, or we vanish based on His assessment of our faithfulness to Him and to His commandments to us. Does your—and my—conduct make us pillars or quicksand in His eyes? Do you seek God's promotion or "Political correctness?" Be a pillar! Be steadfast!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor