

**To Him Who Overcomes – A Challenge of Faith**  
**by Hendrik Joubert**

The blessing announced in **Revelation 2:7** – ***To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.*** – is the first in a series of seven, one each to the seven churches of Asia. Essentially all these promises may be summed up in the word *salvation*, and by implication *eternal* salvation, as is suggested in **Genesis 3:22**: ***...he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...*** It is interesting to consider the different aspects highlighted by each of these promises, but also the challenges they present to our understanding and ultimately what we believe – our faith. (**Romans 10:17**) Are the details as recorded to be taken literally in every sense of the words, or are even the related references to these concepts figurative?

This first blessing to those who overcome connects with the fall of the first couple in the garden (paradise?). Some commentators have argued that the ***tree of life*** mentioned in **Genesis 3** is to be considered *a pictorial-spiritual story* not unlike the parables of Jesus. Others insist that it is to be considered entirely *literal*, while yet others consider it nothing more than a *myth*. (ISBE)

Would he who overcomes literally eat of a tree ***which is in the Paradise of God***, and would such a one become a literal ***pillar in the temple of My God***, as promised in **Revelation 3:12**? Should one decide that the eating in **Revelation 2:7** is figurative would it imply that the information in **Genesis 3** is not to be considered historical?

The difference between that which is to be considered literal and that which is figurative very often is obvious. Some things cannot be considered literally, such as ***James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars.*** (**Galatians 2:9**) This is an idiomatic expression suggesting the prominent position in their guidance as well as their support of the brethren, and not that they became literal pillars such as Lot's wife.

The context of a statement often reveals its nature; however the appeal to context may also be abused in an effort to escape the responsibility to address a Scriptural issue. *You have to read the verse in its context* more often than not serves only as a *conversation closer* by those who have no serious interest in what the Bible says, or who do not want to consider the implications it has for them.

One must be careful not to reach a conclusion unless all information is considered, and subjects are not always directly associated. Paul's discussion concerning the resurrection in **1 Corinthians 15** influences our understanding of both **Genesis 3** (***it is sown a natural body – The first man is from the earth, earthy***) and **Revelation 2:7** (***it is raised a spiritual body – the second man is from heaven***). The context in **Genesis** is a *historic* **Revelation** involves many figures to describe spiritual concepts of eternal life to a yet natural man. description of creation and man's first sin, and the context in

***Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10:17.*** The significance of this verse is greatly unappreciated, often even among those who consider themselves New Testament Christians. The words of Christ may present us with historical, but also spiritual information which challenge our thinking. We will either accept it by faith, or adapt it in unbelief. Hungering and thirsting for ***the pure milk of the word*** which will help us to ***grow in respect to salvation*** (1Peter 2:2) so that we will ***understand what the will of God is*** so that we will no longer be ***foolish***. (Ephesians 5:17)

Considering the simple statement in **Romans 10:17** we must study the word of God so that we would not be ashamed by an inability to make proper application of Scripture (2Timothy 2:15), but more importantly, lose our souls as well as the souls of those who blindly follow us. (Matthew 15:4)

The single most important ingredient necessary to *overcome* is to love truth, and not merely being sincere in what we believe. Those who do not receive ***the love of the truth so as to be saved*** are perfect subjects to be influenced by *delusions* (2Thessalonians 2:8-10), the effectiveness of which may be seen in the sincere questioning of the Lord by some in the day of judgment. (Matthew 7:21-23) We may decide that these were not sincere, and we will be...

Graciously salvation is not by works, but by faith. This faith should be produced, not by our own thinking, but by the word of God. (Romans 10:17) This faith (what we are to believe and practice) was ***once for all delivered to the saints***, and it is to be ***contented*** for with ***earnest***. (Jude 3) The way in which the faith delivered by men pressures us to move away from the faith once for all delivered is a spontaneous illustration and a dead giveaway of where our faith actually lies. Let us determine to fear Him who not only has the power to kill, but also cast our souls in hell (Matthew 10:28) so that we may ***overcome*** and ***eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God***.