

Triumphing Over an Ungodly Thought Life

“We Are More Than Conquerors”

Ron Myers

FOREWORD:

I love this uplifting verse *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Romans 8:37). Have you ever attended a race where your favorite driver or team *destroyed* the competition? I have, even trouncing formidable opponents—an exhilarating feeling. Then, there are the disheartening times when your guy started out great but floundered during the race—not having finished for whatever reason. I’ve experienced that as well. Starting strong is not as important as *finishing* strong. Yes, I’m a motor sports devotee.

Before answering the call to serve the Lord in the regions beyond, among other things I competed in sanctioned motorcycle hill climbs and cross-country events. I later raced snowmobiles on a factory sponsored Bombardier Ski-Doo works team. Our team was out of Ithaca, NY, yet we competed around the Northeastern US, Canada, and even in the World Championship Snowmobile Races in Eagle River, WI. One team member attained *World Champion* in point standings the year I resigned to get married and serve the Lord. I loved rugged cross-country races most and experienced numerous victories. Sometimes I won handily. Others, I lost due to faltering while executing tricky sections or was simply out-raced. Since our team won often, we became targeted by other lesser teams. I was once *taken out* by a jealous opponent who slammed into the back of my sled during the first lap on a half-mile oval as I accelerated out of turn two in the finals of an important championship event.

The impact sent me skidding sideways at speed across the track’s icy surface. As I tried to regain control (still hoping to win), the spiked track caught on a protruding lump of ice, flipping my sled as it flew airborne over the track. Careening against the opposite bank, it rebounded back onto the center of the track with me in tow. Twenty-some sleds thundered past me at speed as I lay there helpless, my shoulder severely dislocated. By God’s grace I was otherwise unscathed. It was the final event in a New York State championship. I was destined to win my class, having taken all the elimination events, yet I was now out of the race. My close friend and teammate rode my sled on to victory in my stead, securing the class championship. It took two months for me to heal enough to compete again. There are faster, more powerful sleds and better riders today, but we were among the best, back then. Any trophies I may have won are now rusty, just as Jesus predicted. *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy”* (Matthew 6:19).

I’m relating these to illustrate the many analogies that can be drawn since racing is comparable in many respects with the spiritual race that we run as missionaries—yet not contending with fellow missionaries. The Apostle Paul was obviously a sports fan given the many race analogies he drew in his epistles (see bottom of last page for a list). Were you aware that *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Timothy 6:12), could also be translated as *“Strive for excellence in the arena of faith?”* Concerning striving for excellence, the *Judgment Seat of Christ* or *Bema Seat* (2 Corinthians 5:10), is where Christians will receive rewards, they’ve earned for being faithful and obedient stewards of the faith (1 Corinthians 4:2). One’s past sins are not rejudged there—they’ve already been forgiven and fully paid for by Christ (Romans 8:1).

The original Bema Seat was as a platform where Olympic contestants stood to receive rewards after their race. They were evaluated by judges who determined which degree of award they would receive, which were leafed olive branch crowns. Some of the traditional décor in today’s Olympic games reflect these designs, in the form of olive branch wreaths and raised award platforms.

INTRODUCTION—STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE:

I recently came across this challenging thought (edited): *“God is relentless in His pursuit of your heart. He desires your sweet fellowship (and that of those He hopes to reach through your life). Meanwhile, Satan is relentless in his seductive attacks against you. His aim is to defeat and destroy you—resulting in the eternal damnation of those whom God could have reached through you. Consequently, a spiritual war is being waged to hinder your effectiveness. There is no neutral ground on the battlefield for souls. So, where do you stand?”*

As believers we are safe and secure *in Christ*. As missionaries, we serve God in the foxholes behind enemy lines, in an intense spiritual battle for unreached souls—utter lost in spiritual darkness at the unreached ends of the earth. Most have never heard a clear Gospel presentation—or maybe they’ve been fed a twisted or incomplete rendition—possibly yet to hear the first word about their Creator, His love for them, salvation from sin and death through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His triumph over the evil spirits they appease in superstitious fear. As messengers of this precious message, we are targets of the enemy. As such, we have bullseyes on our chests and lightning rods strapped to our backs because of our strategic position in world evangelism. The more effective we become, the more the enemy wants to take us out in any way he can—no mercy shown. He uses no-holds-barred dirty tactics as he probes for our weaknesses. But for God and His holy angel armies, we’d be goners.

Gentlemen, God has given us spiritual armor with which, as born-again believers are clothed in Christ’s righteousness. We have the shield of faith and a 24/7 prayer upline to Him who sits on the Throne of Grace through the One seated alongside—our advocate and intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we still need to monitor ourselves, guarding against the lustful appetite of our eyes and thoughts because as red-blooded males, since the lust in our old natures makes us vulnerable. We need to keep short accounts with the Lord in a one-on-one conversational style. Lustful thoughts are easily entertained what with our fallen old natures—which open the way to fallen responses. We also need to be on guard, looking the other way when our wandering eyes desire to feast on things forbidden. No matter how much we might want to allow ourselves that one little glance (followed by another), we need to turn away posthaste by exercising our physical and spiritual neck muscles.

This is something I have learned to practice to avoid that first look as I sense the opportunity approaching. “*A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself*” (Proverbs 27:12). Yet our true strength is in the Lord and not in ourselves through maintaining personal vigilance and applying our spiritual armor... “*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Ephesians 6:10). The better one gets at resisting; the quicker one can sense the moment the flesh wants to admire. That’s when our spiritual muscles need to be deployed, reminding us that it’s forbidden, and to turn away. It breaks fellowship with God as well. Jesus calls it sin when we commit adultery in our hearts (Matthew 5:27–28). That’s what it’s about; maintaining vigilance and keeping short accounts with God.

Temptation to take a passing glance *may not* be sin, but there’s a very blurry transition line if you justify yourself in doing so. The biblical terms for lust are associated with indulging or satisfying one’s cravings or appetite. We salivate when a juicy steak is set before us. In this case it’s a lithe female form that triggers that lust to indulge our eyes and minds. That’s where the lure of pornography is such a bane—like a *Wet Paint* caution sign. Yet Peter says we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises, whereby we are partakers of [God’s] divine nature, having escaped—*second aorist tense, present active voice*—the corruption *that is* in the world *through lust* (2 Peter 1:4). Our thoughts and actions here on earth need to increasingly reflect our standing *in Christ*—the sanctification process in action, spelled out beautifully clear in Colossians 2:6–7, in the earlier NASB versions—with v. 6 being a command (*Imperative*) and with v. 7’s correct grammatical form laid out cogently precise.

If anyone is having trouble conquering his thought life—no matter what the cause or issue—have you noticed the more you try to push negative thoughts out of your mind, the larger they loom. Paul presents God’s biblical key to success in Philippians 4:8-9. Train yourself by “Thinking (*Active, Present Tense Imperative*) on things that are true; honest; just; pure; lovely; good; virtuous; and praiseworthy.” All these attributes describe God Himself, whom we do well in focusing our minds on. Paul adds that when we “set our minds” on spiritual things instead of things carnal or lustful, the God of peace (and peace of God) will be our portion (Romans 8:5). I learned this truth by experience. The moment we make that seemingly magic transition in our minds, the unrighteous thoughts that plague us will fade, replaced by the fullness of God. Practice makes perfect. It’s true, and it gets easier the more we practice it—like exercising our spiritual muscles to strengthen and build them up.

MY TESTIMONY – PART I:

When everything was going great, I was faced with a fiery trial that nearly consumed me—burnt by groundless allegations leveled against me; petty little things of which I was oblivious. Used by the enemy unawares, field leadership clearly overstepped their authority. Assuming the accusations against me were true, they judged me guilty solely on the strength of slander and hearsay—without any facts. Swooping down on me unannounced in SWAT team fashion, I was charged in an *ad hoc* meeting with having nebulous problems. When I asked for clarification, they weren’t sure, yet refused to hear me out when I dissented. I was declared unfit and sent home, based entirely on the insinuations of a jealous missionary, I learned. This same scenario occurred on two occasions—all Satanic in origin, designed to *take me out*. He’s the father of lies and accuser of the brethren “*seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). It was common knowledge that my communication skills were effective, making me a prime target. Returning home, I went back into professional sales and was later appointed to a well-paying career as Southern California regional sales manager. Yet my heart was fixed on my work in Thailand—the unfinished Isan Bible translation. The confusion and anger I felt towards these men festered, their having destroyed my ministry and orphaned new believers. I acknowledged before God my harboring these feelings, but the more I tried to abandon them, the more they haunted me. I felt imprisoned—like being chained up with no means of escape.

These accusations arose when God was greatly blessing my church planting and Bible translation ministry, *taking me out of the race*. Years later they apologized and asked for my forgiveness (which I gave). Yet the damage was done to my ministry, my psych, and my family’s welfare. The Lord led me to one of His faithful servants in Syracuse, NY—a true biblically-based counselor who helped me as he applied the key principles Philippians 4:8–9, which restored my emotional and spiritual wellbeing. My dear wife loves Thailand, but is hesitant to return, fearing it might reoccur. I couldn’t *not* go, and returned repeatedly to fulfill my commitment to translate the Isan New Testament. It was completed and distributed in 2016—after an additional fifteen years of unnecessary delays—all told taking most of my life. The audio version is also completed. Also done is an effective Creation Evangelism booklet, over 100K copies now in print. The whole experience devastated me, yet I’m wiser and stronger in the Lord now, more than ever before. I give all the credit for my healing to the Lord; and the counselor who helped me. Bottom line: Satan lost.

A FRIEND HAS FALLEN:

I’m quite aware of the cunning power of our enemy as he seeks to take us out in any way he can—no holds barred. When my wife and I were in New Tribes Mission language school, we sensed the Lord directing us to Thailand. There was an unreached nomadic Negrito pygmy tribe that roamed the deep jungles on the border areas between Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia. They’re called the Sakai or Senoi people. This group piqued my interest as a New Triber since these were the people Paul Fleming (founder of NTM) tried to reach but lost his health due to Malaria and went home in defeat. I studied all the anthropological monographs I could find, because that’s where I planned to go. There was another young missionary couple that had just finished language school and who were also interested in reaching the Sakai people. So, we made tentative plans to work together. They left for Thailand a few months before we did and were busy studying the difficult Thai language and writing system in Bangkok while we finished our last semester at the New Tribes language school.

Time passed and we didn't hear from them, till one day our entire language school staff and student body were called together for a sobering *ad hoc* announcement. Our potential dream partners were coming home in defeat because the man had fallen into immorality with their young live-in Thai house maid—who was pregnant. We sat there stunned, numbed in our spirits.

Another potentially great missionary couple had fallen because of unbridled sexual lust on the part of the man with a willing young Thai girl. His wife was devastated but found the grace to forgive him and stay with their marriage. Last I heard, he was in the work-a-day world driving eighteen wheelers on cross-country trips, his hopes to serve the Lord having been dashed due to moments of moral weakness. I'm not judging him, just saying, because apart from the grace of God, there go I—or any of us for that matter. Just remember, starting strong, although important, is not nearly as important as *finishing* triumphantly as we lean in Christ's all-sufficient strength. . . .having saved souls to our credit to present to Christ for our labors as we occupy, doing His business till He comes (Luke 19:12-13).

MY TESTIMONY – PART II:

Having arrived in Thailand without partners to work alongside in Southern Thailand, bordering Malaysia—a potentially dangerous Muslim inhabited and largely lawless area—we were asked to consider working in Northeast Thailand (supposedly a “safer” area). We'd be working with another young missionary couple among the Nyaw people, one of the many unreached ethnic groups in the area. (*We're now headquartered in that province's capital: Nakhon Phanom.*) To the best of my knowledge, the Sakai people were still roaming the Southeast Asian jungles in their lost condition, waiting to hear the Gospel message. The enemy had won, or so I thought. Later, while invited to speak in churches in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, an elder of one of the Brethren churches there (with whom I was staying) told me there were Malaysian Christians and church groups reaching out to the nomadic Sakai people there in northern Malaysia, and that they were seeing some response, for which I praised the Lord.

This was during the last years of the Vietnam war and Communist insurgents had infiltrated fringe areas of Northeast Thailand. We were once detained by armed Laotian Communist soldiers while going there to renew our Thai reentry visas, then miraculously let go. I tell people it's because my boss—*The Lord Jesus Christ*—commanded them to do so (an impacting witness). It was a potentially dangerous situation since they had killed two lady missionaries then burnt their house down around their corpses. They also captured two men missionaries, whom they marched barefooted 200 miles over rugged mountain terrain to spend many months imprisoned in the “Hanoi Hilton” where they lost their health.

Failing moral temptation is a real possibility and we men are prime targets. If we aren't alert, we may fall like a sheep led to the slaughter. I too was once severely tested while working on the Isan New Testament. I found myself strangely drawn to an attractive young Thai lady who was a desk clerk in the hotel lobby where I was staying—with whom I had a passing speaking friendship. When the attraction grew, I openly shared what I was facing with my translation assistant, Pastor Pitak. This got it out of the shadows and into the light where Satan couldn't use it. We prayed and leaned on each other as mutual watchmen—guarding each other—since he too had once experienced what I was facing. With red warning flags waving and sirens blaring I ceased any further contact, sensing it was a trap of the enemy and that I was the prey. Although sorely tempted I fought it off, realizing that if I had allowed it to progress Satan would potentially have won and all would be over. The Isan New Testament would remain unfinished, shelved after decades of work. My career as a missionary would be over. I might even lose my dear wife and family, sacrificed to an illicit relationship and a few forbidden moments.

If when we think we are strong in ourselves is the moment we are the most vulnerable. I threw myself on the Lord, who strengthened me to the point where I was able to overcome. I praise God for His deliverance as I remember moments when I felt helpless, like a pawn being bandied around in a great struggle over lost souls going on between powerful spiritual forces around me. I sensed that Satan and his demons wanted to destroy me and take me out—leaving the translation job unfinished and countless souls still unsaved. (The only other time I remember experiencing this sensation of a heavenly struggle over me between light and darkness was just before our marriage and entering the ministry.) But God, by His sustaining grace, was my strength and my sufficiency, including His faithful angel armies whom He sent to watch over and fight for me. “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). Tom Cantor of Friendship with God Ministries penned it this way: “*We have four mighty weapons: the Word of Christ; the Blood of Christ; the Spirit of Christ; and the Name of Christ.*”

This is the first I've spoken of this, apart from at the time with my friend and translation assistant, Pastor Pitak and his dear wife Sri—asking them to stand with me in prayer. I felt it best to keep it private, sensing the knowledge could hurt my wife. Although nothing more than a casual friendship ever occurred, the attraction was powerful—from which I disavowed and turned away. As mentioned, Pitak had been tempted in similar fashion. We men need always to be watchful and cautious, because Satan in his slyness knows how best to hinder and even halt the advance of the Gospel—by targeting people in key positions.

If this paper can help someone who is struggling and needs encouragement, please feel free to use it.

R.M.

Various sports-related terms the Apostle Paul used in his epistles (with approximate counts): run (9); race (3); win (5); beat (1); lose (4); loss (5); wrestle (1); compete (3); complete (1); crown-ed (4/3); excel (1); strive-ing (3/6); prize (3); fought (2); fight/box (4/1); finish/finished (1/1)