

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 35

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS

(continued)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To *him that overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

The closing verse of the message to the church in Ephesus includes the admonition common to the message to each of the seven churches, to *hear* what the Spirit says! Then it gives a promise to "him that overcometh." The implication is that those who overcome would be few in number because it says, "*To **him** that overcomes...*" It is on a singular and individual basis! No church as a whole would overcome all the conditions typified by those things the Lord condemned in each church. Only a few individuals scattered throughout the churches would *truly* overcome all things!

One of the most important truths God's elect can understand in this hour is that there are no "groups" entering into the fullness of God. If you are part of a church, prayer group, Bible study group, or any kind of corporate expression with the vision of sonship and the kingdom of God, not one of you will enter in *as a group*. All groups or congregations of saints are typified by the seven churches, not by the overcomer! Only "him" that overcometh will receive the promise! All groups are composed of people on different levels of understanding, growth, righteousness, obedience, and faith. The overcomer is that person or persons in the group who *pays the price* to apprehend the life, kingdom, and glory of God!

"Overcome" — that is a fighting word; it subdues, conquers, vanquishes, prevails, and comes off the victor! "Overcome" means *victory*. Now "victory" is a word that thrills! Everybody longs to win. If we play even the most trifling game, we prefer to come out victors. This is all the more true when the conflict is a matter of life and death. We are interested in those who win the battle rather than in those who lose. If you do not believe this, go out tomorrow and tell your friends how you struck out and lost the game. You will not be half through your story before those friends turn from you to listen to some man with a sparkle of joy in his eye to tell how he won. We all wish to win! And the glory of this message is that it points the path of victory for every one of us!

Though there are seven churches in the book of Revelation, there is in fact an *eighth church*, though not designated as such. This church will be the overcomer's manifestation! Throughout scripture and the book of Revelation there are references made to *many groups*. At times they are called overcomers, or firstfruits, or 144,000, or manchild, or witnesses, or woman, or bride, or city, or great multitude, or harlot, or Mystery Babylon, or beast, or false prophet, or something else. Groups are made up of any number of individuals sharing the same interests, values, experience, purpose, hope or attainment. One may suppose that he has come out of all groups and is walking with the Father alone, but if there are others who share his revelation and experience he *is part of a group*! Yet, membership in the company of the overcoming sons of God is an *individual* matter! "To **him** that overcometh..."

To each overcomer there is an "I will give..." each promise to the overcomer is a spiritual reality of the kingdom of God! Those who will hear this word to overcome and then overcome will attain to a new and higher reality of the kingdom in their lives. The promises are not to those who *hear about* overcoming, or those who *believe in* overcoming, or those who *talk about* overcoming, or those who *try to* overcome, but the promises are to HIM **THAT OVERCOMETH!** Many have heard and have thrilled at the concept of overcoming and its promises, but the promises are obtained *as we overcome*.

Have you read Hugh Price Hughes' story called "The City of Everywhere?" He arrived in that city one cold morning. As he got off the train, the station was like any other station with the crowds and redcaps, except that everybody was barefooted. They wore no shoes. He noticed the cab driver was barefooted. "Pardon me," he asked the driver, "I was just wondering why you don't wear shoes. Don't you believe in shoes?" "Sure we do," said the driver. "Why don't you wear them?" asked the man. The driver replied, "Ah, that's the question. Why don't we wear shoes? Why don't we?" At the hotel it was the same. The clerk, bell boys, everybody was barefooted. In the coffee shop he noticed a nice-looking fellow at a table opposite him who also was barefooted. He said, "I notice you aren't wearing shoes. I wonder why? Don't you know about shoes?" The man replied, "Of course I know about shoes." "Then why don't you wear them?" "Ah, that's the question," said the man. "Why don't we? Why don't we?"

After breakfast he walked out on the street in the snow but every person he saw was barefooted. He asked another man about it and pointed out how the shoes protect the feet from cold. The man said, "We know about shoes. See that building yonder? That is a shoe manufacturing plant. We are proud of that plant and every week we gather there to hear the man in charge tell about shoes and how wonderful they are." "Then why don't you wear shoes?" The man replied, "Ah, that's the question!"

Let me ask you today, Don't we believe in overcoming? Do we not know the wonderful promises made to him that overcometh? Of course we do! We know about overcoming. We believe in overcoming. We talk about overcoming. We read about overcoming. In fact, we gather together weekly or from time to time and listen to great teachings and sermons about overcoming. Yet many seem to be plagued year after year with the same problems, weakness, fears, confusions, lack, limitations, and failures. Many never seem to overcome. Why don't we overcome? Ah, that's the question! Why don't we overcome? Why don't we?

“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,” said Jesus in the hour of His passion. “Overcoming” is a big word! It means there is something to *come over*, and getting over it is a divine thing. Even the Lord Jesus was made perfect through the things that He suffered, through blessed obstacles and divine agonies. Sometimes we are asked why God permits so much evil. “Permits?” Why, He sends it! The old mystic was right who said, “There is no doer but God.” Not one of the ills of life could ever touch you if He did not open the door. No matter how malignant your assailant might be, when anything has come to you which your soul pronounces unwelcome, praise God and go on — and *then you have overcome*! The evils, as we call them, of life are often not evils at all. We mix up evil with wickedness or some other negative and talk as if the two were the same. They are not! Evil is a larger term, and pain may be included in it. When we understand the ways of the Lord, we would not have suffering, trial, trouble, tribulation and pain expelled from life for all the glory that imagination can conjure up.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial* which is to *try you*, as though some strange thing had happened unto you” (I Pet. 4:12). “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*...be thou faithful...and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may *sift you as wheat*: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen the brethren” (Lk. 22:31-32). If we can realize that God ordains **trouble, trials, and tribulations** to bring forth the gold of His divine nature from these earthen vessels, we can rejoice, as David, in our afflictions and trials and exclaim with him, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might *learn Thy Statutes*” (Ps. 119:7).

One of the fundamental laws of creation is that an **opposing force** is necessary for growth and to produce strength, stamina, and endurance. Any living thing that grows up without any opposition is weak and powerless. God’s sons must be strong and powerful, and anything that desires to be strong, or anyone, must wrestle with a force that is contrary to them. A plant that grows in a greenhouse sheltered from the winds and rains, pampered and protected day after day, may grow large and beautiful, but it is inherently weak, and if suddenly exposed to the elements will quickly wither and die. Any man who wants to build muscular power to be strong to overcome an opponent, must spend weeks and months and years in vigorous training doing heavy exercises, lifting heavy weights, using the **opposing force** of gravity to **develop his strength**. There is a great and magnificent future ahead for the sons of God, and a great work our Father has for us to do in the age and the ages to come, and He is now preparing us and making us ready for the high and holy place He has for us. Can we not see that ALL THE OPPOSING FORCES WE NOW ENCOUNTER, and OUR RESPONSE TO THEM are working together for our good — to develop the strength, character, understanding, compassion, wisdom, faith and power we must acquire?

Sometimes it would seem as though life had no meaning at all; it is only a chaos, and the best that you can do is not to think about it or try to figure it out. Precious friend of mine, do *you* know what *your* life means? It means that this present time and experience is a school, and God has put us here to learn lessons for eternity, and all that has befallen you is fitting you to fulfill your place in the kingdom of God. God has something to do in His wonderful universe and He is preparing His sons and daughters to do it! We are put here to live something out for God, to walk something out with God.

Paul Mueller has written, “The principle purpose which is uppermost in the mind of the Father at this time is the growth and coming to maturity of His chosen remnant. Every other purpose under heaven is secondary to this greater purpose during this exceptional time. Therefore, it is essential that all who are members of this Christ body, the sons of God, should concentrate on their own spiritual maturity. Strive not to do the religious works of man, but seek rather for the fullness of Christ in your own heart and life. There is no other purpose under heaven that can equal this grand and holy purpose of the Father! Put away all the desires and appetites of the world and of the flesh, and seek only to please the Lord.

“If you really care for the masses of the world who know not God and His wonderful grace and mercy, then you will seek for His fullness in your life. If you have really heard the groans of a creation that is suffering under the burden of sin and shame, you will cease all your religious activity, which is really only the works of the flesh, and will follow hard after the Lord. Let us seek to please God as Enoch did, and we will witness a glorious manifestation of His life that will set every captive free. God, in His great wisdom, has linked all of creation’s needs and travails with the glorious transformation of the bodies of the sons of God into bodies like unto Christ’s body. And it is possible that when this glorious transformation does occur, the stones, the trees, shrubs, and grass of the field, as well as all animal life, will lift *their voices* in praise to Him who has fulfilled His word and satisfied the inherent hope within every created thing” — end quote.

Our wonderful heavenly Father is working out a great purpose in His sonship company in this hour. When God first called us into the move of His Spirit in the days of the Latter Rain outpouring, we were used by the power of the Spirit to see miracles wrought. We saw tumors disappear before our eyes, ruptured discs instantly healed so that people who were bed-ridden rose up and went back to work. Multitudes of people received miracles and the baptism in the Spirit by the laying on of our hands. Angels appeared in the meetings, and mighty signs and wonders took place. Then — just as suddenly as the miracles began, they ended — the river stopped flowing and we saw that it was not working like it did.

Nothing had changed in our life, we had not lost our faith, we had not disobeyed the Lord, we had not gone into error, we had not backslidden or fallen into sin. I went to the Lord and I said, “Father, how is it that it is not like it used to be? What is happening?” After some time of searching the mind of the Spirit about this, the Lord clearly answered, saying, “Son, I have shown you my power that you might know me in that measure. But many have misused my power, and disgraced my name. Now I am doing a new thing. I will withdraw my power for a season that I may call my chosen ones aside and speak to them in the deepest part of their being. I must put my hand of dealing upon them as I did upon Moses, David, and my Son Jesus. I will call them into the wilderness of testing and I will deal with them there. I will purge, purify, instruct, mature, and perfect my sons for the day of unveiling.

“When they are prepared for it I will move again in a power a thousand times greater than you have ever witnessed! I will fill them with my glory and they will not go haywire. They will not get exalted. They will not use the power to their own ends. Neither will they use and abuse my people and fleece the flock. They will not build a kingdom around themselves. They will not drag my name down into the mire of carnality, flesh, sin, and shame. They will not touch success and then forget about me. They will obey me in all things for they shall be my sons **in whom I am**

well pleased. They will be a people that has been **cleansed** and **qualified** BEFORE I commit the omnipotent power and authority of my kingdom into their hands. They will be my very own sons made perfect in me. They are going to do wonders, but such as you have never seen before! All nations will be moved by their word, and all things upon earth will be transformed by their touch. Through them my kingdom will come in power and demonstration and creation shall be set free.” And I cried, “Oh God, let it be so!” The Lord has been faithful to His word. Today I see a vast company of sons in preparation throughout the extremities of the earth! His work in us is deep, powerful, and effective! **The hour of manifestation draweth near!**

There is a difference between *learning about* and *learning*. I can learn about football or baseball. I can learn why the referee whistles offside or penalizes a player for clipping. I can learn all about curve balls, strikes, stealing bases, home runs, and outs. I can enjoy watching it. I’ve learned about it. But when players learn a sport, that’s very different. They do more than memorize rules and understand strategies. They learn it with mind and body through grueling practice and experience. Reflexes are tuned, muscles trained, body coordinated. Their learning goes on. No player becomes master of a sport in one or two practice sessions. The elect must **learn Christ!** “But ye have not so *learned Christ*; if so be that ye have *heard* Him, and have been *taught by Him*, as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:20-21). Such learning goes beyond rules, doctrines, or revelations! It’s a process of putting off the old nature and putting on the new. It’s a process of being transformed by the renewing of our mind. It’s a process of learning obedience through the things we suffer. It’s a transformation into God’s likeness! It’s more than *learning about* Christ. It’s **becoming like Him!**

The overcomer is one who STANDS TALL IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. No weight on earth, however heavy, shall be able to hold down or bend earthward those who “come up over” all things. Though the weight of influence and earthly love should cling to these sons of God; though the pressures and problems and perplexities of life should crowd in upon these; though the fear of man and the desire to please man should strive to impede their way; though adversity, calamity, sorrow, tragedy, reversal, and trouble should howl at their heels, none of these weights shall be able to hold down, overcome, discourage, intimidate, upset, frustrate, perplex, or in any way affect those who dwell in union with the Christ who has overcome the world! Though all hell should strive to turn these downward, it shall not prevail; though every foe and earthly friend should conspire together, it shall make the sons of God keep their faces more prayerfully and constantly looking **unto Him**, their forerunner, as they follow on to know, experience, and appropriate His glorious triumph as their very own!

If you would know the fullness of the spirit of HIS MIGHT within you, if you would have His mighty power at work in and through you, then bow very low in reverence before the holy presence that dwells within you, that asks for your surrender to His guidance and will in even the least of things. Live as one given up to a power that has the complete mastery over you, that has complete possession of your inmost being, of your will, mind, emotions, and desires. Seek not, dear one, to *use* the spirit of His Might within you; let the spirit of might *have possession of you* and you shall surely stand in your lot among the overcoming sons of God! This Spirit is given to them that *obey Him* (Acts 5:32). “For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, **they are the sons of God**” (Rom. 8:14).

In the Belgian Congo, the weather was hot and dank. No breath of air stirred; leaves hung from the trees as though they were weighted. In the garden not far from the missionary home a small boy played under a tree. Suddenly, the father called to him: "Philip, obey me instantly — get down on your stomach!" The boy reacted at once, and his father continued, "Now crawl toward me fast." The boy again obeyed. After he had come about half way, the father said, "Now stand up and run to me." The boy reached his father and turned to look back — hanging from the branch under which he had been playing was a fifteen-foot serpent. In like manner, my beloved, OBEDIENCE TO THE FATHER is the route to victory over that ancient serpent, which is the devil and satan, who lurks and slithers about in our own *carnal mind*. If you have received the call to sonship, the voice of the Father is speaking in your land! He is speaking from deep within you, out of the holy sanctuary of your spirit, and you hear His voice every day.

They err who want the fullness of the Spirit and power of God *before they obey*. Obedience! It is a tender listening to the voice of the indwelling Spirit and faithfulness to obey every word that He is speaking from within our inner temple that prepares the hearts of God's sons for the fullness of God! When God commanded Israel to build Him a holy place, that He might dwell among them and be their God, He said to Moses, "According to all I show thee, the pattern of the dwelling, even so shall ye make it." And so we find in the last two chapters of Exodus, eighteen times the expression that all had been made "as the Lord commanded." It was in a house thus built, to His mind, the perfect expression of His will, that GOD CAME TO DWELL. And when the greater house, the true temple of God, came and stood in the earth His declaration was, "Lo, I come to DO THY WILL, O God! In the volume of the book it is written of me." God comes down to dwell in fullness in THE SONS OF OBEDIENCE!

I recall reading, years ago, about a man who had been traveling across America. He came to a wide river and could see on the other side the lights of a city. In order to get there to spend the night, he had to cross this strange and frozen river which was several hundred yards across. He began to walk carefully, one step at a time, until he got ten, twenty, thirty yards out over the river. At that point, being filled with fear he got down on his knees, feeling his way with his hands, afraid that at any moment the ice would give way, plunging him into the black and icy waters beneath.

Finally, his fear so overcame him that he laid himself out flat upon the ice and began to inch along, his heart pounding within. As he reached the middle of the river he heard singing coming from behind him and from one side. Hearing the crunching hooves, he saw a large wagon filled with logs pulled by four horses coming from behind him and about fifty feet to one side, galloping along across the river while the driver sang loudly. As they passed by, he, of course, got up and walked confidently the rest of the way! Ah, just as the wagon load of logs was the **proof** the traveler could safely cross the river, so the firstborn Son of God, who overcame all things, who was perfected, who pleased the Father, who manifested the glory of God, who conquered sin, death and the grave, and is set down with the Father in His throne, is Himself the **living proof** that EVERY SON OF GOD CAN OVERCOME ALL THINGS AND MAKE IT IN TO THE FULLNESS OF GOD! Jesus victoriously strode across the sea of sin, sorrow, limitation, and death and with a shout of triumph stepped onto the other side. Be encouraged, my brother, my sister, for He is the **forerunner** for all who stand tall in His faith and arise to "go over to the other side."

GOD'S SCHOOL FOR OVERCOMERS

So many Christians today are satisfied with merely an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Their eyes are blinded to eternal values, and any efforts to lead them on to higher ground are rebuffed and resisted by a human reasoning which asks why one should waste time on them since they are saved. But our initial salvation, while it is the most astounding miracle of the ages, yet is the birth of a *mere spiritual infant*. There are many further steps which must follow this birth if one is to come into all the glories and the full heritage which is prepared for those who follow on to know the Lord. And not one of us has come all the way up to our full privileges in Christ! There is great glory and heavenly wealth awaiting those who become fully equipped unto God's ultimate purpose. Salvation is nothing more than an awakening to a never-ending heavenly God-kind of life. Then the recipient may become a heavenly billionaire, or remain a heavenly pauper. Our initial quickening (salvation) is a free gift through unmerited mercy and favor. But heavenly attainments of wealth and glory and power are given to those who have salvation, and then go on and grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The first three chapters of the book of Revelation, which are devoted to the overcomer, reveal through the seven overcoming promises the *seven steps* through which an overcomer grows in his walk of sonship to God. Each step represents a new level of spiritual maturity available to each member of the elect in his own lifetime. Each of the seven churches represents areas of short comings or testings which must be dealt with in our lives. It is only as we overcome in each area that we will apprehend within our lives the reality promised to those who overcome. The promise simply speaks of an attainment of the life and glory of God in our experience till we find ourselves seated with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Once the seven promises are fulfilled within us, the victorious believer is then complete, mature, and has attained the first resurrection.

You have watched a violinist playing an exquisite sonata, seemingly without any effort at all, drawing his bow gently across the strings and bringing out of the instrument a depth and poignancy of tone that makes your soul tremble. *You* pick up the same bow and draw it across the same strings, and it will sound exactly like the hair of one animal being scraped over the entrails of another. It simply means that musical skill does not come naturally. You have to work and struggle for years in order to play a violin effortlessly and beautifully. Nor does perfection in the image of Christ come naturally!

According to the laws of nature, it is necessary to grow gradually by stages in order to attain perfection. In this way alone can we make ourselves ready and fit for the destiny for which we have been created! Sudden or hurried progress leaves us weak and imperfect. The oats which grow in a few weeks in Texas do not yield the same nourishment as the wheat which takes six months to ripen. The bamboo grows three feet daily in tropical climates and shoots up as high as one hundred and eighty-five feet, but it remains empty and hollow within. It cannot compare in strength and durability to the tree which grows over hundreds of years. Slow and gradual progress, therefore, is necessary for perfection. God has given us a life-time to be conformed into the image of His Son and *that is how long it usually takes!* Time is one of God's agents. He knows how to

use it! He won't put authority upon a life that hasn't been subjected to time. Jesus was thirty years old before He started His ministry. Moses was eighty.

As someone has pointed out, wouldn't it be a sad thing to tell a child in the first grade, "Today we're going to study trigonometry?" The teacher must begin instead by saying, "If you had one apple and I had one apple, and we put those apples together, how many apples would we have?" God reveals to us only that with which He can trust us, and He reveals to us what we need to know in and for our day of manifestation. Jesus said that ALL THINGS are possible by faith. Now, do not go out and expect to flap your ears and fly to the moon! There is an order of things. God has a law of development. He does not create a great Sequoia tree overnight. The giant Redwoods of California were not made in a day. God causes them to grow slowly. And so God would cause us to develop and *grow* in grace, faith, love, wisdom, understanding, and power!

Psalms 120 to 134 are called Psalms or "Song of Degrees." Each Psalm represents a degree or step up the ascending pathway to Jerusalem and the house and throne of the Lord. The people of Israel sang these songs as the caravans of pilgrims made their way up the mountains to attend the feasts of the Lord in Jerusalem. On what we know as Palm Sunday Jesus began the ascent to Jerusalem. It was there that as He drew near and saw the city He wept over it, saying, "Would that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Lk. 19:41). One still "ascends" to Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is a city set on a hill, and from all points of the compass you have to climb to get there. To the spiritual Holy City and the true House and Throne of the Lord one ascends also in a spiritual sense! This spiritual ascent from the lowlands of the flesh, the natural mind, and the human consciousness is being fulfilled in the lives of the Lord's people today. In this wonderful hour at the junction of the ages, a company of chosen ones is ascending in the Spirit up to the realm of perfection and glory and life.

Seven churches speak to us of different dimensions of growth which all the Lord's elect must pass through. The Greek word for church (*ekklesia*) means "the out-called" and speaks of people coming out of one realm to come into another realm; a people coming out of one world to enter another world; a people coming out of one mind to possess another mind. Seven churches are *seven stages* of moving out of one realm into another, out of one state of being into another state of being. The reason the Lord selected those seven churches is because He worked out in them the mystery of the overcoming life, giving us seven promises whereby we can be more than conquerors through Him. You will see in these churches the unveiling of Jesus Christ! You will also see the veil that hides Him in these churches! And you will see the process by which the veil is removed that HE might be revealed in all of His splendor! This is what is being dealt with all through the book of Revelation — the book of the Unveiling. God is dealing with the veil and unveiling of Jesus Christ! Here you see seven stages of the rending of the veil in the hearts of the saints in order to reveal Jesus Christ in His body. Seven is the symbolic number of **completion** — representing *all it takes to complete the process*.

The seven promises to the overcomer represent seven steps of ascent to the throne of God! The *first* promise is, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). The *final* promise is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). Thus the ascent is from the tree of life to the throne of God! Our first need,

we learn from the promises, is Life. All subsequent promises of transformation and attainment mark the upward path to glory. None of them are attainable until we have Life. And we cannot reach the throne until we have passed through them all in succession. Each reward is greater than the preceding one!

Each step in the process of overcoming brings us closer to the authority and power of Christ's throne. We now see a new generation of Israel's pilgrims walking these steps to glory! They are the firstfruits, the pilgrims of the new order of the kingdom of God. They are nearing the highest step of the seven, and will soon make their grand entrance into the full glory of God's Christ. Each promise to the overcomer reveals a definite and powerful step in the realization of Christ in our lives. All who are apprehended of the Father unto the fullness of God are diligently walking up that ascending pathway. They are daily applying themselves to this walk! By the strength and power of the Christ within, they are walking upward one step at a time. As we walk up the ascending pathway to the throne, we experience within ourselves all that each promise to the overcomer embodies. When we have arrived at the last step, we will then have experienced within ourselves the authority, power, and dominion of God's omnipotent and universal throne! We will be able by the Spirit of God to rule over all things as sons of God!

Ray Prinzing has aptly expressed this truth thus: "The *overcomer's* path is one of *progressive development* that there might be adequate preparation for the next step, and sufficiency for the situation. If we are now yielded to the Spirit of the Lord, and God is having His way in us day by day, at the appointed hour He always has His people fully prepared for what unfolds. This is why we have the pressures of today, that they might be instruments in His hands, to develop and train us, so that when the greater battles arise, we're conditioned and ready for them. He instills the inner call and longing, urging us to go on to perfection. It becomes a paradox, for while He is our peace, and rest, etc., yet in another sense He will not let us rest, but steadily motivates us to go on into His fullness. He builds up an internal pressure that demands we respond, for He causes the vision to be so compelling that we must give heed and follow Him. What force, what pressure is urging us onward today! How unique that HE sets us on a quest to come into more of Him, even while all the time HE IS WORKING IN US to make it become a reality.

"He says, 'You will seek me, inquire for and require me (as a vital necessity) and find me; when you search for me with all your heart' (Jer. 29:13, Amplified). Yet we say, He has never been lost, we are not seeking to find a *lost God*. He is only prompting us to search Him out because of what this works within us as we seek Him. And all the time He is RIGHT THERE, and states, 'I will be found of you, says the Lord' (Jer. 29:14). Bless His wonderful name! Thus, prevenient GRACE takes from man every vestige of credit for the act of coming — it all originates with God! 'DRAW ME, we will run after Thee' (S.of S. 1:4). *Run* is a response to *His drawing*! He makes us so thirsty that we become desperate for Him. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks so pants my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God' (Ps. 42:1-2). How well the Psalmist knew this INNER URGING. It was not yet in all of his brethren, hence they could not understand him. Why must he be so insistent about seeking after God? Why can't he be satisfied with the usual religious fare? **BECAUSE GOD FIRST** — God first put this desire deep within his being, and God will not let him be satisfied with anything less than His divine fullness and reality" — end quote.

God's highest purpose is for every son of God to come to the full stature of Christ during the years of this life here on earth in the flesh! The term of our life in this present mortal condition is given: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). Thus our years in this corruptible form is set by God at seventy years. But what is the purpose of our seventy years of earth-life? Paul attempted to answer this question when he wrote, "For which cause we faint not; but though our *outward man perish*, yet the *inward man is renewed day by day*" (II Cor. 4:16). Seventy years are determined as the average life-span of man in the flesh for the purpose of bringing the carnal man of sin and lack and limitation to an end, and of raising up the spiritual man to the maturity and perfection of Christ.

This is a day of instant things. In this fast-paced, fast-food society, we are used to having things as we want them, when we want them. Everything is instant. We can walk into a room and get instant light, heat, or air conditioning by flipping a switch. We get up in the morning and drink instant coffee, eat instant oatmeal, instant soup, instant mashed potatoes, and instant other things too numerous to name. If it isn't instant, then we turn on the microwave. All too often we expect instant results in our spiritual life — instant perfection, instant power, instant maturity, instant sonship! But, dear one, God doesn't believe in shortcuts! Haste in the high and holy things of the kingdom of God is freighted with grave danger. As George Hawtin once pointed out, when the almighty Creator plants a redwood tree in the womb of mother earth, He is looking forward in infinite wisdom and patience perhaps five thousand years to a day when it is a towering monarch in the forest. Think it not strange, then, that He would spend the entire span of a man's brief life-time in bringing to perfection a saint who is to rule the world as a son of God, bringing life and order out of the dreadful death and chaos that everywhere reigns upon earth. The wonder is that it does not take much longer. Let us, therefore, not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

This is the only God-ordained method by which all creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption! Seventy years are determined for the fulfillment of this purpose in each one of us and it is ample time for the process to be completed! I do not see that one must be recycled again and again, as the pagan doctrine of reincarnation asserts. Certainly God deals with humanity beyond this life, but **SEVENTY YEARS IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO COMPLETE THE WORK IF WE YIELD TO THE DEALING HAND OF GOD.** Of the firstborn Son it is written, "And the child grew, and *waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom*, and the grace of God was upon Him. And he went down with them (Mary and Joseph), and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus *increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*" (Lk. 2:40,51-52). It took Jesus only thirty years to attain to the full stature of sonship to God! In thirty-three and a half years He had not only demonstrated the sonship life and ministry, but had overcome all sin, every device of satan, and the power of corruption and death itself, and ascended to the universal throne of His heavenly Father!

Although we see the seventy year span of this life-time as being provided to bring forth a matured and perfected son of God, nevertheless, we know that our God is omnipotent and not bound by time or any of the other restraints that man would place upon Him. If our mighty, omnipotent Father chooses to bring a person to the maturity and perfection of sonship in a few years or a few days, that is His prerogative to do so. Since we are living in the days when the Holy

Spirit has sovereignly and supernaturally sent forth the call to sonship, and is accelerating His dealings and purpose, it is altogether possible that the Lord will set apart individuals for this sonship calling who will be brought to maturity at a much faster rate, just as He did with His firstborn Son. The Lord is well able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we may ask or even think without consulting us or conforming to ideas and doctrines we may have. On the other hand, God can reach out beyond the grave and bring back by *resurrection* those who have walked with Him as sons in this life, but who went by way of the grave because the hour of manifestation had not yet arrived. We cannot put God in a box! But regardless of the time involved in our perfection and transformation, *it is a process*, and not performed apart from Father's dealings in our lives and our growth and development into Him!

How gracious and wise is our God in all of His ways! The Bible is literally packed full of mysteries, parables, types, shadows, and allegories, which are only unfolded by the Holy Spirit to **THOSE WHO FOLLOW ON TO KNOW THE LORD**. Jesus once spake a parable which holds a revelation of unspeakable glory for all who would be conformed to the image of God's Son. The parable occupies just two short verses, but its message is a thing of tremendous importance to those who yearn to grow up into Christ. Jesus said, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these""(Mat. 6:28-29).

Consider the lilies! What gives exceptional meaning to this object lesson from the lips of Jesus is, that He was not only the author of the parable, but the creator of the lilies. It is like an inventor describing his own machine. He made the lilies and He made man and He makes the New Creation — all on the same broad principle. All together, lilies, men, and sons of God, He gives life and causes to grow and develop into beauty and maturity. So Jesus points to the miracle of nature in the plant kingdom to teach us how to live a free and natural life in Christ, a life which God will unfold for us, without anxiety or effort, just as He **UNFOLDS THE FLOWER**.

These wonderful words of Jesus were not uttered to inspire us to become horticulturists; we are not to consider the lilies simply to admire their beauty, to wonder at the delicate strength of stem and petal. The thing we are urged to consider is — **HOW THEY GROW!** Without anxiety or effort the flower blooms into loveliness; without weaving or press the leaves are formed; without artist's paint or brush the flower is tinted with exotic hues; without toiling these complex tissues spun themselves; without any effort or struggle they slowly came created from the loom of God in their "greater than Solomon" glory. Oh, the wonder of it! The lily has only to remain where it has been planted, drink deeply of the rain the Father sends upon it, and the sun He shines profusely day by day. Trusting and resting in the Father's care the lilies *grow*. Consider this, O child of God, concerned that you might not be able to attain the beautiful stature of God's Christ. Consider the lilies — **HOW THEY GROW!**

Everything grows without trying, and, on the other hand, nothing can grow by trying! No man by taking thought has ever added a cubit to his stature, nor has any son or daughter of God ever approached nearer to the stature of the Lord Jesus by **working** at it! Jesus did not become the Son of God by working — He became the Son of God by **growing!** Any who thinks to reach this blessed height by anxious effort is really departing from it. Christ's life unfolded itself **from a divine seed**, planted centrally in His nature, which grew as naturally as a flower from a

bud. Only *life* can do that! For a seed to germinate, sprout, grow, change, develop into a plant of beauty and grace requires the power of an **indwelling life**. Therefore the man who has within himself this great power — the life of Christ — contains within himself all that is needful to become a son of God! The man who does not have this life active in him *cannot* be transformed, but the man who has it *must be*. The life must develop out according to its type; and being a seed of the Christ life, it must unfold into A CHRIST. The end of the growth process is perfection, the mind of Christ, the character of Christ, the power of Christ!

Do not worry, dear ones, as to whether you seem to be making progress or not. There is nothing in the world that grows so fast that you can **see** it grow! Let God be the judge of how much or how little you have grown. Your duty and mine is to *abide in Him, resting in faith, pressing patiently* toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Rising spontaneously from the dust of earth, shaped into beauty by secret and invisible fingers, the lilies develop we know not how. But we do not doubt it. Every day it is done; it is nature, it is GOD. We are spiritual enough at least to understand that! But when the Christ-life within us rises slowly above the thoughts of the carnal mind, pushing up its pure nature in the teeth of the desires of the self-life, bursting forth into manifestation through the hard clods of the flesh, shaping itself mysteriously into the image of Christ, we often imagine that our own efforts and zeal have contributed substantially to the process! A strong will, we think; hours of prayer, days of fasting, faithfulness to the Lord's work, Bible reading, study, and sheer determination — these account for our growth. Not so! Spiritual stature is not the product of anxious work, self-command, self-denial, or self-control. We confess that the growth of the little lily IS A MIRACLE, spontaneous, instinctive, uncompelled, but somehow we must fret and toil and spin. Ah, Christ in us is not formed by great **effort**, but by a great **POWER!** It is the power of His indwelling Life!

Yes, there is a realm of "doing," where, like Christ, we must be about our Father's business, working the works of Him that sent us. But these are works which are the **RESULT OF HIS LIFE IN US**, not a means to His life. Christ is the *cause*, works are the *effect*. It is when men try to make works the cause of their becoming spiritual that they have missed the mark. There is no work on earth that can make you spiritual! But His life in us will surely manifest itself in righteousness, love, mercy, compassion, giving, blessing, touching creation. Become **still**, my beloved, before the God of all grace and glory and you will soon learn that you do not need to go out in search of the conditions and elements of your growth in Christ; they, rather, **WILL COME IN SEARCH OF YOU!**

A dear friend of ours in the city of Detroit shared this meaningful experience with us some years ago following a message I brought along this line. She said, "I will never forget my first day in school in a rural community in the South. I arrived alone, but refused to go inside. I didn't think that I would enjoy school, and was quite certain that I didn't need an education. In my childish mind I made a firm decision not to go to school at all. Quickly I passed by and went straight to my grandmother's home. Grandmother, surprised at seeing me, asked, 'Why, Veta, what are you doing here? Didn't school start today?' I actually felt that I was in command and could carry out my plans, so I replied with finality, 'I have decided not to go to school!'

"Grandmother was a wise old woman, and appeared to respect my decision. She didn't scold, but sadly said, 'I'm so sorry to hear that, Veta. I'm really disappointed that you aren't going

to school. You see, grandmother needs someone to write letters for her, and I had hoped that you would go to school and learn to write. I thought you would be the one to write the letters for me.' I loved my grandmother very much, and her words impacted my childish mind. I changed my mind, deciding to go to school just long enough to learn how to write. I left grandmother's, made my way back down the road to school, arriving late, of course, and walked in with my hat and coat on for I was certain that I would be there for only a short time.

"The teacher was very understanding and quite gentle with me. Later, I found myself at the blackboard, chalk in hand, the teacher's hand upon mine, showing me how to make the number 2 along with the letters of the alphabet. After some minutes I asked the teacher when would we get on with the writing. Suddenly the whole prospect loomed menacingly before my mind and irritatedly I inwardly shouted, 'If we don't go faster than this, I'm going to be here ALL DAY!' And I was, of course. I went back to school the next day, and the next, and the next for many years to come! I became a star student, and a joy to my grandmother."

So, God omnipotent and omniscient, has established here upon earth a School for the training of those destined to be the future rulers of the universe. This school is known as "the church." None shall ever rule upon the throne of the Father who has not graduated from this School! And what a great Teacher we have! One begins in God's School of Kingship and Priesthood in the very first grade. We start with the ABC's. God opens the class and says, "Now children, we are going to learn how to rule. To rule means to govern, to control, to be master over that which is ruled. You can never rule anything until first you overcome it *within yourself*. To *overcome* means to 'come up over' that which is over you! When, within yourself, you rise above the circumstance, the problem, the fear, the habit, the limitation, so that it no longer dominates you, you are then ready to control it, to no longer be the victim of circumstances, but the master of them." So, the nitty-gritty of everyday life is the classroom where God teaches us by experience *how to overcome*, how *foreign*, how to *bless*, how to *love*, how to *redeem* and *restore*, how to have *compassion*, how to *use power* with understanding and wisdom — how to be a King and Priest in His kingdom!

Every child of God called to sonship is now in school! We may feel that we have graduated from school long ago, but that is a mistake; we hadn't even started to school at that time. When you received the call to sonship and departed from the comfort of the religious norm, and went out in the world on your own, you really then, *started* to school. When God drew you out of the religious systems of man and separated you unto Himself you may have felt you "graduated" into a new realm — and you certainly did! You graduated from *kindergarten*! And immediately you were enrolled in the first grade of God's SCHOOL OF SONSHIP. In this school there are several courses taught, but every student must major in *overcoming*, which is the hardest course to master and finish known in any curriculum in the world today. This matter of disciplining one's thoughts, desires, emotions, habits; of training one's soul and body to function on the level of the mind, wisdom, nature, and power of Christ is of the greatest importance and spells the difference between success and failure in the Kingdom of God. To finish this course marks the difference between being in the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, or remaining a babe in Christ, a nominal citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

God will never give up on us! He is investing in us with every intention of receiving a harvest and expanding His kingdom. Our all-wise Father sees our potential. He knows our capacity to grow and develop. He is keener at discerning it than we are! He is also well aware of our weaknesses, and is ready to help. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” said Paul. The children of God make a lot of mistakes, for children are children, both naturally and spiritually. Our ability to learn from our mistakes is part of what God uses to build character in us. In the book of Revelation we read that it is the overcomers — those who don’t leave God’s school or resign from His purposes — who ultimately are given power in His kingdom. Have you made costly mistakes? Have you been stumbling and seemingly wasting God’s time? Don’t resign! Don’t leave God’s school! His investment in you is too great! He will see you through! Regardless of how difficult the lessons, *graduation day* is coming! The positions in His authority and glory are waiting! Learn the lessons that will help you to better serve in the kingdom of God. As you do, great heavenly wealth and power and opportunity to bless and restore all things lie ahead for you. Through you creation will be lifted, redeemed, restored to life and liberty and glory — and that’s just the beginning!

Let us learn our lessons well — and let us never presume that we have attained to something in God that we have not yet qualified for. And never let us grasp after a place or position the Father has not conferred upon us. There is no need to DECLARE OUR SONSHIP — the Father Himself declares His sons! “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased...hear ye Him” the voice from heaven said and will say again. Some have grown weary of waiting for the manifestation God has promised, so they have decided that what they term “classical sonship” was mistaken, and have “watered-down” the hope and settled for a lesser reality, and are calling themselves sons on a lower plane than God has called us to. Some are trying to tell us that if we get out and do all the religious things we used to do, moving in Passover and Pentecostal power, saving souls, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, blessing lives, touching humanity — that is manifest sonship. NO IT ISN’T! That is all good, there is nothing wrong with saving souls and blessing mankind! But we have been doing that for two thousand years and it has *not* brought the kingdom into all the earth, saved the nations, or delivered creation from the bondage of corruption. It has *not* eradicated sin, sorrow, and death from the planet! THAT IS NOT SONSHIP! These anxious souls just cannot *wait* for the Father’s *appointed time*. The place that God has called us to will be in His time, not ours. “The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time *appointed of the father*” (Gal. 4:1-2).

Some of us have been in school for a long, long time and have moved through many levels of God’s teaching. We have been passing from grade to grade, from realm to realm, from experience to experience, from discipline to discipline, from dimension to dimension in God. We have moved through the tabernacle with all of its furnishings and compartments, and we have now come to the Holiest of all. We have partaken of the Lord’s feasts one after another, and He has now brought us to the feast of tabernacles. We have arrived at the threshold of the third day. God still has plenty of time to finish His work, for His plan is a *plan of the ages*. We have passed through ages *within ourselves*. God has brought us from Abraham to the Manchild in our brief life-time, for the ages are within us.

It is vital and necessary for us to grow spiritually from faith to faith, from one dimension of faith to another, for the salvation we seek is revealed in that manner. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed **FROM FAITH TO FAITH:** as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). There are **steps** of spiritual progress in our walk unto the fullness of salvation. With each step of spiritual progress we take, the salvation we have been promised is revealed to us "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10) until we shall stand complete in Him and as He is.

GREAT CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE NOW IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S ELECT. We *are* being changed "from glory to glory" by the Spirit of the Lord! We are not of those who come to a certain understanding of God and His purposes and then settle down in that spiritual "place," to await a change that will come some day. Our change will certainly be *consummated* at a time yet to come, but the changes must take place progressively within us NOW! Each step that we have taken in God has made us the more mature and victorious believer that we are now in the kingdom of our Father. We cannot hope to be transformed in that "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" appearing of Christ if we fail to take any of the revealed steps of spiritual growth, which are revealed to us by the Spirit in the glorious promises to the overcomers out of the seven churches, and are necessary for our complete and total transformation. Each step of spiritual growth in God is an indispensable and essential part of our full salvation!

The promises of God are vast and varied. Some of them are free and can be obtained very easily. That is why so many people receive them! But if you would be a king and priest in the kingdom of God and receive the power to bless and deliver creation; if you would learn the life and authority of the government of God in preparation to take the kingdom and reign with Christ, then that is a different thing altogether. You must become a follower of them who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*. It takes patience to attain any worthy goal. It takes endurance too! No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven. We do not attain sonship by a single bound. Neither do we qualify to reign with Christ in a moment of time. It is not something you receive one night at the altar. We have need of patience. We must through faith and patience grow up to the spiritual age of thirty. We are becoming mature ones through experience. Only such can serve as the king-priests of the Most High!