

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 41

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

(continued)

“Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*; and ye shall have tribulation ten days” (Rev. 2:10).

Every man and woman who has even in the least partaken of revelation will recognize with deep appreciation the truth that it was in Eden’s fragrant garden that our first parents encountered that ancient serpent, which is the devil and Satan. There in the garden of God they were *tested* and *tried*! Not outside the Garden, but inside. The first step in the preparation of the sons of God is when we are lifted out of the vineyards of the world, and planted in the garden of God — the kingdom of heaven on earth. Then, many and varied are the ways and paths by which the Lord in faithfulness processes and develops the people He has chosen. A most important aspect of this preparation is found tucked away among the priceless gems in that treasure house of truth which is the Song of Solomon. “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;

blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” (S. of S. 4:16).

Some of the following thoughts are gleaned in part from the book CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE by Cora Harris MacIlravy.

“The Garden,” which both in Genesis and the Song of Solomon has the significance of the kingdom of heaven on earth, has been set up by Jesus Christ through His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return as the Holy Spirit. In this garden God has planted precious plants, stately trees, costly spices, and aromatic herbs. This garden is not only the universal kingdom of the Lord, not only does God’s called and chosen elect live and feed and work in this garden, but we are part of it. Each of our lives is a little vineyard or orchard or spice garden which is part of God’s great garden. Thus we pray earnestly that the work which the Holy Spirit must do in our “gardens” may be done to the glory of God! Very often we are more inclined to ask God to bless us, supply our needs, heal, deliver, perform miracles, and flood our souls with glory, than we are to pray that He will deal, purge, prune, dig, and uncover all that is hindering His perfection in our lives. Ah, the blessings will come, the fullness will break upon us, but the north wind must blow first!

There is a mighty cry from the yearning heart of every son of God in this significant hour, “Awake, O North Wind!” We are earnestly longing for Him to blow upon our gardens in stripping and dealing and testing, however hard it may be on the flesh. We are praying most fervently that God will send His Spirit, as the north wind, to search out the pride, to search out the self-interest and self-will, to search out the soulish passions, emotions, and desires, to search out even the hidden spirit of Babylon that remains; and that He will blow upon it until it is blasted and drops off, and we are clothed in humility, righteousness, and the mind of Christ!

We are praying that the Lord of the garden will send the Holy Spirit, as the north wind, and strip away the false assurance that believes we have more than we have, and mistakes revelation for possession. How many times we *assumed* that we had entered into possession of the nature of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the power of Christ, the immortality of Christ, and all things that God had shown us and called us to begin to possess. Many times the Lord has let us see the blessedness of the path in which we walk alone with Him, and we thought we had laid hold upon it. But when He sent by the Spirit the testings and trials to blow upon our lives, we found that He was not yet our all in all; that we were still depending upon someone else, or something else, be it our feelings, our works, our faith, our gifts, our ministries, our gatherings, rather than upon the LORD HIMSELF WITHIN.

How little we recognize our own plans, desires, schemes, and efforts, which are as suckers in our spiritual lives! How little we appreciate the place we give the flesh and our own interests, our likes and dislikes, our experiences and self-absorption, our religious activities and multiplied works, which eat the strength and life out of our relationship with God. When God sends the Holy Spirit as the north wind, He comes and uncovers the flesh and carnality within us, exposing our own thoughts, acts, and position. With a blast of conviction, He blows upon those suckers, and like a mighty wind He sweeps down upon them to try them! As they fall off, we are left apparently stripped and bare; but, in reality, we are in a better condition to bring forth blossoms and fruit to His glory than ever before!

Therefore do we with faith and confidence say, “Awake, O north wind, and *blow upon my garden!* Lord, send the testings and processings that you know I need; send the hard things that are needed to try every blossom. Blow upon the blossoms in my life that are so beautiful and look as if they would bear the luscious fruit of sonship; blow upon my gifts, my ministry, my doctrines, my works, my hopes, my

plans, and doings, and prove them whether they will abide, or whether they have no beginning of kingdom fruit in them.” There are dealings and revelations in each of our lives which we have gladly embraced, there are callings to higher realms in God that have made much show before our eyes, we have reveled in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, anticipating our sonship and our place with Christ upon His throne; we have rejoiced in the glory that is to be revealed in us, and the great and powerful ministry to come with His fullness. Yet the question follows — to what degree have we yielded that God might make these things FRUITFUL so that they remain no longer merely dealings and revelations, head-knowledge and dreams, never becoming possessions in some measure for our todays!

God also sends the Spirit, as the north wind, to blow upon every relationship in our lives; upon those relationships we deem harmless, but which are not of the Spirit nor of God’s will, and come between the reality and us, sapping the life of sonship out of us, and robbing the inheritance of God. Upon every relationship that is not of His choosing and to His glory, He sends the strong north wind! He separates us from everyone and everything that is hindering the maturity of HIS LIFE; He blows upon our human affections, and before His north wind our soulish attachments wither and die. Not one thing of eternal value that has been inworked in our lives can be harmed by the north wind of God’s testing and proving, which only blasts and withers the superficial and unfruitful; and the sooner they fall off the better. The sooner we see ourselves stripped of our self-confidence and blindness, our false hopes and delusion that we are far beyond the place to which we have really attained in God, the better!

He blows upon our involvement with religious systems, our feverish religious activities, our running hither and thither doing the so-called work of the Lord, our trotting from meeting to meeting, from preacher to preacher, from revival to revival, and before His north wind

the anointing upon these avenues of service lifts and we are left with a bare branch from which the superficial beauty and fragrance has been stripped. It is the strong blasts of the north wind that drive our roots down deeper and deeper into the soil of HIS LIFE, until that which has gone down and out of sight, is greater and stronger than that which appears on the surface. We are astonished to behold some of the most beautiful blossoms of our lives drop off; those in which we had placed much confidence! But the blasts of God's wind which destroy the fruitless blossoms, also cause the roots of true spiritual life to go down deeper INTO CHRIST; and they become firmly rooted and grounded IN HIM. Thus stripped and with our roots going deeper and deeper into the Christ within, we learn to take the time to wait on God long enough for HIS LIFE TO ARISE WITHIN US, long enough to hear HIM SPEAK, and have Him divulge HIS WILL to our seeking heart!

To every apprehended son of God who has purposed in his heart to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, God will send the searching north wind of the Spirit that his garden may be stripped and prepared for fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. When He has dealt with everything, He will send the *south wind* of the Spirit in wooing and encouragement, in warm showers of faith and glory and victory, which will refresh and entice the fruitful buds to come out and develop into the fruit of the Christ-life. The more testings the Lord sends, the stronger the searching north wind blows upon our garden, the more spices and fruit are perfected, and the more fragrance and glory flow forth from our lives!

Come smell the spices that abound in the garden of the Lord! Spices of love, spices of grace, spices of compassion, spices of mercy, spices of goodness, spices of righteousness, spices of joy, spices of peace, spices of faith, spices of the mind of Christ, spices of wisdom, spices of understanding, spices of power and victory! It is not the gentle, soothing south wind that wafts abroad these costly spices of the

divine nature. It is *the north wind that whips and beats it fine*, that proves whether it is divine spice, or merely an imitation of man's soul.

As the spices are bruised, the perfume comes forth, for it is the hard things that make the spices give out their odor. Let God send the north wind upon our lives until He sees that it is enough; and then let the south wind blow that the spices may flow out! Thus the heart of the Lord is made to rejoice as He walks through His garden and smells the fragrance of our spices; as He beholds the fruit that is being perfected in our lives by the working of His Spirit! It is His garden, not ours! They are His precious fruits and spices, not ours! Though they are perfected in our lives and borne upon our branches and are sometimes spoken of as ours, they are really HIS; for CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE IS APPEARING WITHIN US! Come, O north wind; come, O south wind; and blow upon our garden!

THE CROWN OF LIFE

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a *crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10).

From the dawn of time the crown has been the symbol of RULE, whether by secular monarch or by sacred priest. There are two different words in the Greek New Testament which are translated “crown” in English. One of them is *stephanos*, which denotes a “wreath,” or “chaplet.” The other is *diadema*, meaning a “diadem.” The most common term rendered “crown” is *stephanos*. This crown is usually a laurel wreath woven of fragrant branches. It was granted to winners in the Olympic Games and also as a token of public honor for distinguished service — especially military leaders who had been victorious over their enemies on the battlefield. It was also given at marriage feasts, especially in royal families, to celebrate the joy of the bridegroom in

having “won” the maiden as his bride. This crown always denotes the VICTOR’S CROWN — the crown of an OVERCOMER — one who has fought and WON! This is the crown that is promised to the overcomers out of the church in Smyrna — the ones who are faithful unto death!

Paul reminds us that the athlete trained and ran to obtain a *corruptible crown*. Those green leaves of the laurel wreath would soon dry up, turn into a faded brown and crumble into oblivion. The branches soon became dead and brittle. Have you won trophies in your lifetime? If you have lived a little while and have had a chance to look back on some of them, you have seen them begin to turn and you wonder why in the world they could have seemed so important at the time. I wonder about what Olympic stars, who spend years of grueling training working to win a gold medal, must think thirty years later when they look at their medal. What does it really amount to then? Athletes will give themselves to incredible amounts of self-sacrifice to win some perishable crown. In contrast to this, oh ye saints of God, OUR STEPHANOI are INCORRUPTIBLE CROWNS which will never fade away in death — for our crown is the Crown of Life — LIFE ITSELF!

The Victor’s Crown is granted as a reward for faithfulness — it is the trophy earned by steadfastness, perseverance, and carrying the battle onward to victory. There was once a king who had a heavy stone placed in the middle of a busy road. He hid himself and watched to see who would stop and remove the cumbersome obstacle. Men of various walks of life approached it and went around it. As the king watched, some men openly cursed the king for allowing the road to be so cluttered. One by one they dodged the task of removing the heavy stone. At last, a poor peasant, on his way to town, approached the place. His back was laden with a load of vegetables which he was going to sell. He stopped and contemplated the stone. The king watched eagerly. The peasant laid his load on the ground. Taking a deep breath, he huffed and puffed as he rolled the heavy stone off the road. Turning

around, he spied a money bag which had been laying beneath the stone. With trembling hands, he opened the bag. It was filled with a fortune in gold pieces. There was a note folded among the pieces of gold. It stated that the person who removed the stone could have the gold. It was signed by the king!

Beneath every task that the Lord puts in the pathway of our spiritual journey, is a hidden blessing. We, like the people in the story, have a choice. We can dodge the obstacle if we wish! But we do it to our own hurt. Our King will reward us if we faithfully *overcome* in each test! There are crowns He has prepared for the overcomer. We will receive them if we press on to victory! “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, **if we faint not**” (Gal. 6:9). Faint (quit) in your fulfilling of the Lord’s will and you will reap no reward. That is the law of sowing and reaping! “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things **which we have wrought**, but that we receive a **full reward**” (II Jn. 8). The word translated “wrought” is also translated “gained.” Either way, the message is clear: it is possible to lose rewards which we have gained! We must be faithful to the end of the journey, to the completion of the process, to receive a full reward.

“Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which thou hast**, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11). If, by faithfulness, we hold fast to the ground we have already gained, we will receive our crown. If we do not stay faithful all the way to the end, we will *lose* that crown which we have already gained! “The end” is not when your heart stops beating, the end is the laying hold upon the promise, the receiving of the inheritance! If we are not faithful to the end, and lose our crown, *somebody* is going to receive it! The Greek word for “take” here is *lambano*. It is also translated “receive.” It is not that some other person is going to snatch your crown from you...but God WILL HAVE A PEOPLE, a firstfruits, to display the fullness of His life to creation. Should we fail to *follow on* to become that people, God will raise up another

generation, just as He did with the children of Israel who refused to believe Him and enter into the Promised Land. That is the law of the kingdom!

May God help all who read these lines to realize that if we would be overcomers we cannot be sluggards or quitters! Nothing can defeat us except our own **unbelief!** I think of a young man whose goal (in the natural world) was to become a member of the state legislature. Now that is a high goal for a man to try to reach! He strove with all his might and was defeated. So he decided that he should go into business. The result was that he went bankrupt and spent seventeen years paying off the bad debts of his crooked partner. He fell in love with a beautiful woman and death snatched her out of his arms. He then decided to go into national politics. He ran for congress and lost. Then he sought for an appointment to a government office (the U.S. Land Office) but was rejected. Then he became a candidate for the vice-presidency, and he was defeated. If any man had reason to quit, this man did! He had a young son who was the darling of his life. And the boy died! Did he give up? No, though many a lesser man would have. Today in Washington, D.C. you can look up into his face, filled with sorrow and compassion, and yet with a certain determination as he sits there in his great white chair in the Lincoln Monument and looks down upon the Union that he saved and the slaves that he freed. He didn't quit! He became an overcomer! He prevailed! And he being dead, yet speaketh. And, beloved, you may feel today that you have failed every test and opportunity that God has set before you on the journey to the Throne — but arise and shake the dust from your feet, be strong and of a good courage — the race has not ended yet

Oh, yes, IT IS THE OVERCOMER WHO RECEIVES THE **CROWN OF LIFE!**

And how true it is that we are only able to fully overcome by virtue of being made partakers of the divine nature! To be “crowned”

means to be given kingly authority. As the kingly authority and dominion of the divine nature is raised up in our lives, ascending the throne of our hearts to reign within us, we are **crowned** — both **ruled by** the spirit and **made rulers** — not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of a divine life! **THE CROWN IS LIFE!** Crowned with Life! Oh, the wonder of it!

“Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is my deep conviction that He speaks not of the death that takes this old body to the cemetery, but the death that comes by the INWORKING OF HIS CROSS until all that pertains to the realm of carnality has been completely and forever dealt with. Then, and only then, are we CROWNED WITH LIFE, His life reigning within without interference or possibility of defeat.

It is hard to understand the full implications of *life* until one sees clearly that there is a dimension of *His life* which is a *free gift* and another dimension of *His life* which is given *as a result of overcoming*. This is what most Christians miss! Let us consider a few scriptures that speak of the life which is a *free gift* by faith. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). “For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift of God* is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the *free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18).

Now we shall examine other passages that reveal a realm of life which is **not a free gift** at all! “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (testing); for *when he is tried*, He shall receive the VICTOR’S CROWN OF LIFE” (James 1:12). This “crown of life” is reserved only for the Victors — the Overcomers! Consider how great is the exhortation of Paul wherein he says, “Know ye not that they which run a race *run all*,

but *one* receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but *we* an *incorruptible*. I therefore so run” (I Cor. 9:24-25). “To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the *tree of life* which is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

That the great apostle himself had not yet (in his opinion) qualified for this “crown of life” he states plainly in his epistle to the Philippians. Harken to his words! “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may *win Christ*, and be found *in Him*” (Phil. 3:7-9). Surely Paul did not have to go through all that sacrifice, humiliation, stripping, and death in order to have Christ in his life — to be *saved*! Paul himself had explained to the Philippian jailer the simple requirement for salvation: “*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). But in chapter three of Philippians Paul continues, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF (OUT FROM AMONG) THE DEAD. NOT as though I had ALREADY ATTAINED, either were ALREADY PERFECT: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:10-12).

Fortunately, Paul gives us some very vital information concerning this resurrection “out from” or “from among” the dead, without which we would be very much in the dark. He tells us just how he was planning to be included in it! He also tells us how others came to be included in the same class with him, and he states that the revelation concerning this great attainment and the way into it, is the sign of spiritual perfection (Phil. 3:11-15). Yet the popular teachers of this day have

totally missed these great truths! Let us consider them very carefully. They are of the utmost importance to all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship to God! Paul informs us that he had given up the world, he had given up his former religion among the Jews, he had given up everything, that he might suffer with Christ, with his nature transformed to die even as Christ died. “IF BY ANY MEANS I might attain unto the resurrection out from amongst the dead.”

A moment’s reflection will suffice to convince the reader that the apostle is not speaking here of the broad truth of “the resurrection of the dead,” inasmuch as *everyone* must rise again! “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). In the Greek language the resurrection “of the dead” is *nekron* or *ton nekron* and is applied to all classes of people because all will be raised. But the term *ek nekron* — “out of the dead” — is not once applied to the unjust or the ungodly, or in any general sense. The resurrection of which Paul spoke was not even the general resurrection of all saints! Paul knew that he was a saved man, and as such knew there was positively no way he could escape the resurrection of the just. Now, if there were but one resurrection of the saved, as the church systems teach, then all of his strivings were altogether uncalled for and useless!

But no! Paul was not striving for something that needed not to be striven for, nor was he striving in vain. And thus he wrote to the saints at Philippi, “But whatever former things I had that might have been gains to me, I have come to consider as one combined loss for Christ's sake. Yea, furthermore I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege — the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth and the supreme advantage — of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more clearly and fully. For His sake I have lost

everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish in order that I may *win* Christ...that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from HIS RESURRECTION; and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into the likeness of His death, in the hope that IF POSSIBLE I MAY ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION THAT LIFTS ME OUT FROM AMONG THE DEAD EVEN WHILE IN THE BODY. Not that I have attained this ideal or am already made perfect, but I *press on* to lay hold of and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me” (Phil 3:7-12, Amplified).

Ah, my beloved, the resurrection “of” the dead is one thing, but the resurrection “out from among” the dead is a mightily different thing! If *all* the people in a building leave it at the same time, it is the coming out “of” the company; but if only *some* of the people present leave, theirs is a coming out “from” the rest of the company. It was for this resurrection “out from” the dead that Paul longed continually! This was the bright and blessed hope that shone upon his soul and cheered him among the sorrows and trials, the toils and the difficulties, the buffetings and the conflicts. Every soul who dies, both saint and sinner, must be in the resurrection “of” the dead, for, as in Adam *all* die, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive! There is no possible way of avoiding it! Christ has bought it and paid for it!

To be a partaker, however, of the resurrection “from among” the dead, and, as the Amplified Bible so beautifully brings it out, to attain to that resurrection that lifts us out from among the dead **even while in the body** — that, Paul tells us, is a special blessing and distinction for those who FOLLOW ON TO KNOW THE LORD! He says that “perfection” or “completeness” in the full stature of Christ is the prerequisite! These not only are clothed with everlasting life in the spirit, they are invested with such **incorruption** and **immortality** in spirit, soul, *and* body, as to be forever and completely beyond the capacity to sin or the capability of death! This happens while we are walking around on two feet! This is

not merely never-ending spiritual life, but a CROWN OF LIFE — God's own divine and eternal life in the fullness of HIMSELF!

This, my beloved, is that resurrection “out from among” the dead, even the “crown of life” which is that *full salvation* that includes the plentiousness of His incorruptible life, nature, and power. It is the *full salvation* of spirit, soul, and body in the here and now, a victory so complete, so powerful, so divine and eternal, that there is no possibility of ever sinning or dying again. And while I have called it a “salvation,” it is **more** than salvation, it is something **beyond** salvation, an attainment, the PRIZE of a quality and dimension of life the first Adam has never known! Not even in Eden! For in Eden Adam *could sin* and Adam *could die*. But these overcomers possess the very fullness of the *divine nature*! They are not merely “saved by grace,” but have totally laid down their own lives and completely taken up HIS. They are an incorruptible and immortal people spiritually, soulically, and bodily.

This is the *TRUE ETERNAL SECURITY* of which men teach. Why is this resurrection such a **prize**? Why is it worth giving up everything to run the race? Because it speaks of a **realm of life** and honor and glory and dominion in the fullness of Christ which none others shall receive! It is reserved for *overcomers* alone — not for the general run of Christians who have hob-nobbed with the world, fornicated with the harlot religious systems of man, and counted other things more precious than the **prize**!

The vast majority of believers are of the persuasion that by faith in Jesus they have received the *full measure* of eternal life — a never-ending life with God in the spirit. Multitudes of believers are unaware that there are more than one level, degree, plane, or dimension of life in the world of the spirit. But do not angels have a different level of spiritual life than sons? Oh, yes, there are various planes of life in the spirit, both in realms of light and of darkness. All men are *not* created equal! The scriptures are clear that God's overcoming elect shall have

not only a never-ending life, but a *quality* of life, a *maturity* of life, a *power* of life, a *character* of life, a *fullness* of life, a *dominion* of life, that makes them KINGS! CROWNED with life! REIGNING in life! Every little child has human life. With that human life they can play with dolls, toy trucks, and do other childish things. Yet, there is a *development* of that human life that makes some men great! They become the men of accomplishment, the heroes, men of recognition and power whose names fill our history books. In like manner, any child of God with God's life can go to heaven and play a harp! But only overcomers are CROWNED WITH LIFE — Life to reign with Christ upon His throne!

The Lord is bringing His overcoming remnant into THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE. It is greater than Pentecostal power! Pentecostal people die, but our Lord Jesus the Christ is a priest forever after the power of an endless life and He lives to die no more! This power is greater than the power to speak in tongues, prophesy, heal the sick, cast out devils, and do signs and wonders. It is greater than witnessing power, and even greater than power to raise the dead. Those raised from the dead by Pentecostal power die again! Pentecostal power lies within the “in part” realm of first Corinthians 13:8-10). When that which is *perfect, complete, and full* is come, that which is in part shall be done away!

Soon, very soon, those powers will no longer be needed because the manifest sons of God shall arise in the power of the MELKISEDEKIAN PRIESTHOOD, AFTER THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE, to deliver creation from THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION. A ministry is coming where there is no limited measure of the Spirit, no “in part” manifestation of the “gift” realm. There will be no need to heal the sick, cast out devils, multiply bread and fish, or raise the dead — it will be a ministry from the IMMORTAL REALM where everlasting life will flow fully and freely to all creation, swallowing up mortality in life! Death is not the grave or the coffin. DEATH IS THAT WHOLE DREADFUL REALM IN

WHICH MAN HAS EXISTED EVER SINCE THE TRANSGRESSION IN EDEN. Mankind groans to be delivered, not just forgiven, not merely saved from sin and sickness and trouble and the grave, but out of death, out of the DEATH REALM altogether!

We can only speculate what it will be like to be in the full power and glory of *immortal life*! God is moving to bring His holy remnant into the power of an indissoluble life, even now. There will be a full and complete severing from the earth realm, from the carnal mind, from the death realm and all its claims. God wants a free, heavenly, celestial people, a body of sons totally detached from all that is earthly, limited, and temporal! It is possible to move into a resurrection realm in our consciousness that places us beyond time, beyond the thinking and power of the world, beyond the bondage of health, security, and death itself. Is that not the greatest power that God can give mankind — to make him an eternal *spiritual being* in the eternal glory of God? Not a disembodied spirit, but a *spiritual being* with a *spiritual body*! Ah, what a PRIZE! What a CROWN! “So let us run...”

Note, precious friend of mine, I did not say that God would make us *spirits* — but *spiritual beings*. What God is making is a NEW CREATION — something that has never been before! It is God (spirit), but not just God. It is man (form, image), but not just man. It is God and man brought together in a union producing a race of beings that are not God or man — yet GOD **and** MAN! It is the NEW CREATION! In the vast storehouse of truth embraced by the holy scriptures no part nor phase thereof is in any way more outstanding or clear than the truth that man was designed by his Creator to possess a body. Man is not designed to have his spirit flit about through eternity without a body. Jesus Christ is the first of this new creation and the firstborn among many brethren, and He is a *spiritual being* having a glorified *human body*! He is the GOD-MAN! That, my friend, is sonship!

The apostle Paul echoes the sense of revulsion found in the heart of every man at the thought of being found “naked” or “disembodied.” Speaking of the earthly tabernacle of flesh, he writes, “For we know that if our *earthly house of this tabernacle* (body) were dissolved, we have a *building* of God, an *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be *clothed upon* with our *house* which is from heaven: if so be that being *clothed* we shall *not be found naked*. For we that are in *this tabernacle* do groan, not for that we would be *unclothed* (put off our body), but *clothed upon* (our house from heaven put over top of this tabernacle), that mortality might be *swallowed up* of life. Now He that hath wrought us FOR THIS SELFSAME THING IS GOD” (II Cor. 5:1-5).

There is another body, thank God! Formed of the incorruptible life of the resurrected and glorified Christ of God, the *second man*, the *last Adam*, the *God-man*, the *spiritual man* with a *spiritual body*, the firstborn of the *new creation species*. This marvelous body is from heaven, just as my present body is from earth. It is the offspring of the last Adam, just as my flesh body is the offspring of the first Adam. I do not hesitate to declare to you that as a man PUTS ON CHRIST he puts on not only the spirit of Christ, but also the *resurrection body* of Christ, and this body is OUR HOUSE FROM HEAVEN! As the pure and holy life of the Son of God is formed within us God shall also give us bodies worthy of such divine life, bodies capable of expressing all the wisdom and nature and power of that blessed realm beyond sin and death, yea, beyond time and space and matter! What a PRIZE! What a CROWN! This is the CROWN OF LIFE — the crown which IS LIFE ITSELF! Aren’t you glad!

God is even now bringing forth an *incorruptible people*. Overcomers! Those who shall overcome *all things*. And of them, finally, it shall be said, “They fought many, many bouts, and were crowned *every time!*” No more weakness and failure. No more flunking two tests and passing one. Kings and priests! Reigning in God’s own

nature. Reconciling the world. Subduing the kingdoms. Restoring all things. As kings to reign, as priests to redeem and reconcile. Ah, beloved saints of God, let us *press on* to obtain this glorious and eternal CROWN OF LIFE!

NOT HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches; he that overcometh shall *not be hurt of the second death*” (Rev. 2:11).

This is a strange yet wonderful statement! I would draw your attention to the fact that it does not say that the overcomer experiences nothing of the second death, that he does not pass through it, or that its work is not wrought in his life; but the thought is that he will not be “hurt” by it. It is possible to pass through the most terrible experience and not be hurt by it. Listen! “And these three men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they HAVE NO HURT; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”(Dan. 3:23-25).

Oh, to know that we can pass through the darkest night or the hottest fire or the deepest death and not be hurt by it if Jesus goes with us! How heartening and assuring to read such promises as these: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: and when thou walkest through the fire, thou *shalt not be burned*; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. 43:2).

The word “hurt” is from the Greek *adikeo* meaning to be unjust, do wrong, injure, or offend. Armed with this understanding we may paraphrase Revelation 2:11 thus: “He that overcometh shall not be done an injustice, wronged, injured, or offended by the second death.” The great difference between the carnal man and the child of God is that the carnal man is taken hand and foot and “cast” into the lake of fire, fighting, kicking, screaming, cursing, and resisting all the way, while the child of God willingly and obediently walks into the fiery processings of God hand in hand with his blessed Redeemer. And, one way or the other, ALL MEN MUST DIE UNTO SIN!

When the natural man becomes the spiritual man, the great change is described by the Holy Spirit as a passing from death unto life. Before the transition occurred, the practical difficulty was this: How to get into harmony with the new environment of the kingdom of God. No sooner do we enter into the kingdom of God than the problem is reversed. The question now is: How to get out of harmony with the world, the flesh, and the devil! The moment the new CHRIST LIFE is quickened within there comes a great anxiety to break with the old, for the regenerated spirit has nothing in common with the old. The former way of life now becomes embarrassing! Because of “sin in our members” it refuses to be dismissed from our consciousness. It competes doggedly with the new nature of the Christ! And in a hundred ways the former traditions, the memories and passions of the past, the fixed associations and habits of the earlier life, now press in to draw us to walk after the flesh, complicating the new walk. The complex and bewildered soul, in fact, finds itself confronted by two contrasting faculties — the flesh and the spirit — each with urgent but incompatible claims. It is a dual consciousness of a double world, a world whose inhabitants are deadly enemies, and engaged in perpetual civil war! The position is perplexing. It is clear that no man can attempt to live both lives! No man can walk both after the flesh and after the spirit anymore than one can walk down two roads at the same time.

His testimony will agree with the apostle who wrote: “For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out; for I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds I do not desire to do are what I am ever doing. Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it — it is not myself that acts — but the sin (principle) which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law of my being that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands. For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self — with my new nature. But I discern in my bodily members — in the sensitive appetites and will of the flesh — a different law at war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs — in the sensitive appetites and will of the flesh. O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from the shackles of this body of death?” (Rom. 7:18-24, Amplified).

To walk both after the flesh and after the spirit is morally impossible! “No man,” as Christ so often emphasized, “can serve two masters.” And yet, as a matter of fact, here is the quickened child of God being in relation to both worlds — flesh and spirit! Is it not because we *are* in our constitution both flesh and spirit? Who can deny it! Someone says, “But my old man is dead!” Yes, my friend, your *old man* is dead, but your *flesh isn’t*! If you are still living in a *body* that has *fleshly desires*, your flesh is *not dead*. People get such distorted ideas about such simple things! Because of the spirit within and the flesh without we are brought into relation with two realms — sin and righteousness, light and darkness, truth and error. Therein lies the warfare! What is to be done in such an emergency? How can the inner son deliver himself from the ever-persistent call of the flesh?

The ready solution of the difficulty is — TO DIE! Not for our “old man” to die, for he is already crucified with Christ, but for us to DIE TO SIN, or to KILL THE EVIL DESIRE LURKING IN OUR BODILY MEMBERS. We must recognize as *dead* what *God says is dead* and we must *put to death* what *God says is still alive and must be put to death*. If people who are harping only on the fact that their “old man is crucified” would read the scriptures in this light, find out what God says is dead and what God says we are to mortify or put to death, it would be quite a revelation to them! “So *kill* the evil desire lurking in your members — those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you, that is employed in sin: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry” (Col. 3:5, Amplified).

To die to any reality is to withdraw correspondence with it, to cut ourselves off from all communication with it. The solution of the problem will simply be this: for the spiritual life to *reverse continually* the processes of the fleshly life. The spirit man having passed from *death unto life* — the fleshly man must next proceed to pass from *life unto death*. Regeneration of the spirit in short must be followed by the degeneration of the flesh, the carnal mind. And this DEATH PROCESS is the SECOND DEATH — the DEATH OF DEATH! Now it is no surprise to find that this is the process everywhere described and recommended by the Holy Spirit! Paul asked the burning question, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” and swift came the answer, “O thank God! — HE WILL! Through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24-25).

Listen to the words of the apostle as he presses this beautiful truth home to the hearts of the understanding saints in Colosse: “If then you have been raised with Christ to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead, aim at and seek the rich, eternal treasures that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. And set your minds and keep them set of what is above — the higher things — not on the things that are on the earth. For as far as this world is

concerned you have died, and your new real life is hid with Christ in God. So KILL the evil desire lurking in your members...PUT AWAY AND RID YOURSELVES OF ALL THESE THINGS: anger, rage, bad feeling toward others, curses and slander and foul-mouthed abuse and shameful utterances from your lips! Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old unregenerate self with all its evil practices, and have clothed yourself with the new spiritual self, which is ever in the process of being renewed and remolded into fuller and more perfect knowledge upon knowledge, after the image of Him who created it" (Col. 3:1-10, Amplified).

Let me repeat — all men shall die to sin! Some lovingly submit to God's dealings that the dreadful death of the carnal mind in their members may be "mortified" or "put to death," while others must be subdued and broken under the severe heat of refining fire. The former pass through the death to self — but are not "hurt" by it. By dying in a living and active faith to everything of the flesh, and living by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, a perfect work is wrought in which everything that is in any way opposed to God is brought to death. These become what God seeks in order to satisfy His heart! In the measure that we are identified with the cross of Christ, and made conformable to His death, in which it is no longer our will but HIS, in that measure we are "dying out" to the first death, via the process of the second death, **the death of death**, our whole being coming up in the likeness of His resurrection.

The second death — the destruction of the carnal mind and its hostility and enmity against God — is not to be feared by the called out overcoming elect of God — it is God's arrangement where all the effects of the first death shall be disannulled, and all carnal-mindedness shall cease. For us who willingly submit to this process "no man taketh our life from us, we lay it down." But for those who will not lay it down, I do not hesitate to say that IT WILL BE TAKEN FROM THEM!

Let me quote the timely words of Ray Prinzing: “Now — while we see the victory of the ultimate, a complete triumph over death, first death, second death, ALL DEATH to ultimately be brought to an end, there is a present tense application which is before us. God has apprehended in this hour, as in all preceding generations, a remnant in whom HIS SPIRIT is working, and they are becoming daily experiential partakers of His death, overcoming all the desires and lusts of the carnal mind. To those who now OVERCOME, the same shall not be ‘hurt’ of the ‘second death,’ when it is manifested in its more severe forms, as portrayed in the term of being ‘a lake of fire.’ Praise God, with the inworking of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to overcome all the evil of this present age, and all the carnal mind, we shall not be done an injustice by the second death. THE WHOLE PROCESS IS UNTO VICTORY. There may be suffering involved, for indeed, it means death to all our pre-conceived ideas, death to all the rebellion of our self-will, but it also means that we shall be loosed, set free from the shackles that bind, and with the inflow of His life we shall walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God” — end quote.

Make no mistake about it! There are multitudes who shall resist God until the extreme measures He must use to subdue them are beyond our comprehension. For them the second death shall hold terror, and will prove a most painful experience. Let us die now! Let us die to sin now! Let us die to our stubborn wills now! Let us die to our fleshly ways now! Let us take the cup of suffering and submit to the refining fires now! Let us arise in the newness of *His life* now, to be conformed to His image. He that overcometh NOW shall not be HURT by the second death! Aren’t you glad!