

The Overcomer

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Chapter 1 - The State of the Overcomer

"And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:5).

"And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27).

"And her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne" (Rev. 12:5).

"He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony and they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).

I have no doubt whatever in my heart, beloved, as to the message which the Lord desires to be given at this time. It is concerning the "overcomer". I am quite sure that there will be very few who will not agree that this is the day in which, of all matters, this is the matter to consider: for, if there is one thing pressing upon us more than another, it is the question of overcoming, overcoming in a day like this.

Let us, at the outset, prepare the way for a close application of things by a few concrete statements concerning the nature of the overcomer, what the overcomer is.

What the Overcomer is — His Position, Vocation and Adversary

We are made well aware in the Word that the overcomer is of considerable significance to the Lord. The seven-fold repetition of that word in the opening chapters of the Revelation makes that perfectly clear. The overcomer only comes into view in a day of decadence and declension. It is important for us to recognize that. It is when things are not as the Lord desires them to be, and has fully provided that they should be, are altogether otherwise in a general way, that the overcomer is brought to our notice. That is always so wherever you find that which answers to the meaning of the overcomer, though the term itself be not mentioned. The name does not matter so very much: it is what is signified that matters, and this you will find scattered right through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and it always appears at a time when things have fallen from the Divine standard.

Remember that! Therefore the overcomer is set over against, not general evil, not a general state of sin, not a general bad condition, but the failure of God's people in particular. It is when the things of God have fallen to a low ebb and the people of God have lost their Divinely appointed position, that the overcomer is brought into view, or spoken of.

Then, further, the overcomer is the one, or the company, that is standing for that fullest thought of God when that thought has been let go. It is as well for us to know exactly what the overcomer is. There are some ideas about the overcomer which can be immediately dismissed. One of these ideas is that overcomers are a kind of elect of the elect, a spiritual elite chosen in the foreknowledge and counsels of God to occupy a special place. Let us dismiss that idea at once, for it is not true. That would be altogether contrary to God's mind. God's mind is that all His people should occupy the position which the overcomers are represented as occupying, and these only occupy it because the others have failed. So that overcomers are not an elect company out of the elect.

Another thing which we can dismiss at once is that overcomers occupy a different place from all other believers in the matter of grace. Quite a lot of wrong ideas have been made to circle round the overcomers in that connection, and these have discredited the whole matter. One of the ideas is that of reward. This has been given an exaggerated place, and grace has been made to be less in the case of the overcomers than it really is. Now believe me, beloved, of all the people in the history of this world right up to the end, the overcomers will know more than any others the necessity for the absolute grace of God, and will sing most loudly the song of grace in the glory. So often the reaction to this matter has just been this: Oh, when you speak of overcomers coming to a certain position, being rewarded in a special way, you are making a difference between them and all others in the matter of grace, as though they were a favoured people in a sense that is not the favour of grace. But that is not true. Let me repeat what I have said. There is one thing which will lie very, very near to the hearts of all who will become overcomers, and that is the deep, deep, unwavering conviction

that, but for the grace and mercy of God, they will never get through, and they will be more conscious of it than any others. Well, let us dismiss these wrong ideas, and get the real meaning of the overcomer.

Now all this means that overcomers are those who have vision regarding God's fullest purpose and thought for His people. They have vision in a day when vision has been very largely lost. They see when others are not seeing. The eyes of their hearts are enlightened. That which God is really after, is a very clear and present thing with them, and one of the features of a time in which the overcomer is brought out, whether it be in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is that it is in a day when, to use the phrase concerning the times of Samuel's boyhood, "there is no open vision". That is why this further word occurs and recurs in the Revelation alongside of the term "overcomer", namely, "he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear". He that hath an ear! That is but to change the faculty from that of seeing to that of hearing. The same thing is signified. It is perception, a faculty to perceive, a capacity for apprehending. I am not sure that there is not, in the repetition of that phrase, a suggestion that in the churches amongst the Lord's people, there are many whose faculty for hearing what the Spirit saith has become dulled or dead, and the Lord is appealing into the midst of His people to anyone who is not in that state to hear. So that the overcomer is one who has a spiritual faculty for seeing, hearing, grasping, perceiving what the Lord really is after and what His full thought is in a day when it is not so in general amongst the Lord's people.

Then in this introductory word, the final thing is this, that all this that we have said means that the overcomer stands to resist and nullify all the work of the Evil One in relation to the Church. So far as the overcomer is concerned, it means that all the work of the enemy is brought to nought, that the overcomer says, in a representative way, The Church is not overcome! There is that in the Church which denies to Satan a universal triumph, and I think that is what is conveyed or suggested here in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Revelation by the summarizing of Satan in this comprehensive way. First of all, in an inclusive way, he is presented as the great red dragon. That designation is seen to embrace these further terms: "the old serpent", "he that is called the Devil and Satan", "the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth"; and, later, "the accuser of our brethren". Can you find me any more titles for him? Well, here he is summed up. The dragon includes all that. I know the difference in the things represented by these words, but that is not the full meaning of things here. Satan, in the character of the serpent, the old serpent, is the beguiler. We recall the words of the Apostle Paul: "even as Satan beguiled Eve". The beguiler, the deceiver; that is the serpent. If you speak of the serpent, you always mean that which works in an underhand way to get an advantage by misrepresentation, by a lie; beguile by false presentations. The Devil — the maligner, the accuser, Satan — the adversary or hater. You gather that all up in the great red dragon and you have the ideas of ferocity, of cruelty, of strength, of destruction. All that is brought out in this twelfth chapter and the overcomer is up against that; Satan in full force, all that he is in all the forms of his historical activity and expression. The overcomer stands before that, and the issue is with the overcomer.

Now all that, mark you, is focused primarily and mainly against and upon the Church, and it is as in the Church that the overcomer stands for the Church, to save the Church, to preserve the Church's testimony intact. It is a tremendous spiritual thing that we are up against. This is not a mere presentation of historic things. I know a great deal has been made about this great red dragon with his seven heads and his ten horns, and a good deal of history has been read into that about kingdoms and so on. Well, if you like to take it that way you can, but it is a tremendous spiritual thing that the Church is up against, terrific spiritual force, and all that we have in the first chapters of this book of Revelation, if really understood, emphatically bears that out and shows what Satan is really after in his assault upon the Church. We may see just a little of what his object is as we go on.

Well now, this is what the overcomer is, the position of the overcomer, the vocation of the overcomer, and what the overcomer has to face. All that wants breaking up and bringing nearer home.

Three Aspects of the Overcomer

We can reduce it to a threefold phase. There are three aspects to be considered in connection with the overcomer. Those three aspects are a state, a position and a testimony. The position is the result or the issue of the state. The testimony comes out of the state and the position to which that state

brings. Now, that sounds a little technical, I know. If only you could just sit down with that and think about it, you would begin to see there is a tremendous amount gathered up into that. It is against these three things or this threefold thing that Satan is so ferociously, cunningly, mightily set.

1. His State

(a) Righteousness which is of Faith

He is set in the first place against the state of overcomers, that is, the state of the Church as the Lord would have it. What is the state? It is the righteousness which is of faith. Beloved, find righteousness which is the very righteousness of God, and you have completely and utterly and at every point demolished Satan. You have got rid of everything that represents Satan, all the ground of Satan's activity, all the ground of Satan's hope. You have got rid of all that side of God's activity which relates to judgment. Well; Satan is overthrown once you find a condition which is God's own condition of righteousness, His own righteousness. In order to maintain his position and do his work, Satan must find a ground of unrighteousness, produce a condition of unrighteousness, get a people into a position of unrighteousness. You can go right through the Word of God and find how that one thing opens it up. Satan's strength is always in the realm where there is unrighteousness. Satan's kingdom is not just an official thing, it is a moral thing. Of course, rightly speaking, it is an immoral or an immoral thing, but you understand what I mean. It is a question of moral state. We have to get new ideas about that word "kingdom". Do not let us hold on to this idea about the kingdom of Satan or the kingdom of God being something official, something set up with officers appointed to rule. This ruling the nations with a rod of iron, this kingdom, does not merely mean that God sets up a state on the earth or in heaven and appoints people to occupy positions of authority. That is not the case. That is official. This whole thing is a moral question. Satan's kingdom falls immediately you find a state which is the righteousness of God. He has no more power when you come to that position.

I said that all that activity of God on the side of judgment is finished when you find the state of God's righteousness. You have that classic illustration in the case of Abraham and the cities of the Plain. God announced through His messenger that He was going to destroy the city, and Abraham entered into a controversy with God. What about the righteous? Are You going to destroy the righteous with the wicked? God said, No, I can never do that. That would, in effect, be to destroy Myself. Then it behooves you, Abraham, to go and find the righteous and if you can find them, then I cannot destroy; I should be turning My hand upon Myself. Then off Abraham goes, so to speak, and searches high and low for a number which he thought would justify his appeal to God, would be an adequate basis for answering God's requirement, and he had to reduce and reduce and reduce. Five righteous! No, he could not find five righteous. Therefore God is justified in judgment. Could Abraham have found among the Sodomites a modicum of righteousness which is of God, God's power to judge would have been stayed. A tremendous thing is righteousness; the righteousness of God, not our righteousness. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags". There is no righteousness in us. No, God's righteousness is what is before us. Well, here all the way through from — yes, before Abraham's day — from Abel's day, right on through the whole of the Scriptures the question is that of the righteousness which is of faith. We recall Paul's tremendously comprehensive, closely-argued letter on the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. What a power it is!

Now, God's thought for His own people is that they should stand there, that they should be there as before Him, clothed in His own righteousness. What a state to be in! The very righteousness of God wrapping us round, so that, as God looks at us, He sees nothing but His own righteousness, and nothing of what we are by nature. Oh, do not let us think this is too elementary, beloved. This is an ultimate thing, this is one of the big issues for the overcomer at the end, and it is on this that Satan is fighting to the last. If he can get you or me or any child of God into the place where they lose that ground of faith, that ground of confidence, and accept condemnation under his accusations, he has won. If he can meet one child of God who, despite all the accusings and all the stirring up of nature and all that Satan, the great red dragon in fury and cruelty and hatred and accusation and power can bring upon him, none the less stands his ground in faith, and says, Yes, all that, all that may be true, yet in God's eyes, because of faith in Christ Jesus, I am a partaker of His very righteousness; Satan is defeated. That is the overcomer. It is a matter of a state by faith.

What is it that Satan is after with us? To destroy us? No, not in the way in which we sometimes think. He has one bull's-eye to his target and that is the faith which relates to the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. That is his objective and that is why righteousness is given the simile of a breastplate. You will remember the word that we have in Isaiah 59:17, "He put on righteousness as a breastplate". Again, in Eph. 6:14, we have the expression "the breastplate of righteousness". Here, you see, the very vitals of our spiritual being are involved — "the breastplate of righteousness". It is the covering for the heart. But what do we mean by the covering of the heart?

Well, let us look at one or two passages and we shall soon see what is meant. In the letter to the Hebrews, we have it very clearly explained in other language, "...which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:9,14).

It is a question of conscience. It is right there in the heart. You have a bad conscience, you feel uncomfortable in your heart. How are you going to deal with this evil conscience? Oh, what a word is this! Let us look at it again, "...that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect." "As touching the conscience"! Do hold on to that. As touching the conscience, made perfect. That is the question at issue, that is what God is after. Now it says of these sacrifices and offerings which were but symbols, that they never could effect that, but "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God", cleanses the conscience. This is the making of the conscience perfect. How does the Blood of Christ effect this? Righteousness is in that Blood. That Blood is the incorruptible nature of the Lord Jesus. Incorruptible! I always like to stay with that word. It is not just uncorrupted but incorruptible nature, nature which cannot be corrupted, which is beyond the power of corruption. "Which of you accuseth me of sin?" Was ever a man able to challenge the world on that wise? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Psa. 26:10). Impossible! That follows this statement: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David saith concerning him... Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:24,27). Death had no power over Him because there was no corruption. Incorruptibility is the destruction of death's power.

Now the Blood of Jesus Christ is the value of God's own righteousness, and Satan is against the Blood because it is the righteousness. The appropriation of that precious Blood, the appropriation of that Divine righteousness by faith, is the thing which is going to destroy all the power of Satan. "They overcame him because of the blood." If you like to change the word, you can. The change will only be with regard to one aspect. The Blood is all-inclusive, but you can change the word for present purposes and say, They overcame because of the righteousness which is of faith. That is the word of their testimony, a breastplate covering the very conscience, defending the conscience. How are we going to defend our consciences against the Accuser, whose one object is in some way to bring us again under condemnation in our own conscience, to accept condemnation in our own hearts? How are we to meet that? How are we to defend ourselves against that? By the breastplate of righteousness, His righteousness, His incorruptible nature which is for us before God through faith.

You will see that I am tremendously convinced of the necessity of a word like this. You may think it is the elementary Gospel. It is that, but it is something more than that. We shall find as we go on that Satan will endeavour to wear us out, and to wear us out on this wise, by pressing upon us our own unworthiness, our own wickedness, our own sinfulness, our own awfulness, all that we are that we would not and should not be, all that we are not that we would be and should be. He will never give up playing on that ground. If ever you entertain a thought, to say nothing of employing words about fighting Satan, meeting the adversary, victory over him, remember that it is on this wise. This is no objective fight. You cannot go out against the enemy in an objective way like that. The fight is felt in your own heart. Those who can use very bold language about Calvary's victory, and all that sort of thing, may all the time just be the playthings, the pawns of Satan in this matter of 'victory because of righteousness'. In that matter, they may be altogether defeated. Well, this is where the testimony of the Blood comes in. You and I hold precious the Blood of Jesus. Herein is the preciousness, that it brings an end to Satan's authority and power. It is through the Blood that we

come to the throne; and do not make that material and objective for the moment. Recognize that basically that is spiritual, spiritual ascendancy, spiritual and moral reigning. But if we do not come experimentally into that now, there is not much hope for us at some terminal point in the ages. We have to know something of this now. It is basic to reigning with Him. "They that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life..." That is bringing a throne position, in a spiritual and moral sense, to bear upon the enemy now. Oh, the Lord cover this word in our hearts!

Brethren, if our heart condemn us not, what a strong place we are in and what a weak place the enemy is in! How can that be? "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, purge your conscience..." — "If our heart condemn us not..." So Romans 8 follows on Romans 6. The Cross in Romans 6 sees all the ground of unrighteousness purged, put away, and "there is therefore no condemnation".

(b) A Life Governed by the Principle of Righteousness

In speaking of our hearts, the very vitals of our spiritual man being covered by God's righteousness, in addition to a standing, there has to be a life which is governed by the principle of righteousness. So we find that word taken from the Psalm and applied to the Lord Jesus in the first chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Do you notice the immediately preceding words? "Of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." That is a heart state. A breastplate of righteousness! This brass is to be a mighty strength of hatred against unrighteousness and a mighty strength of love for righteousness as characterizing the life. We have to be concerned and exercised on this matter of practical righteousness. Our standing is glorious, the state which is ours through faith is a glorious state, but He who was the Righteous One was governed by righteous interests throughout his life, and of Him it was said, "Thou hast loved righteousness".

I will not go further now, other than to remind you that this is what constitutes an overcomer. The very first application of that word was to Ephesus. What was the matter with Ephesus? "Thou hast left thy first love. Remember from whence thou art fallen." You see the principle. Fallen! That love, that first love, which is the love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity, that heart matter has somehow become affected, injured, and it has brought them crashing down from spiritual elevation, from the heavenliness that is set forth in Ephesians. Satan is after this state. If he can get at that, he has cheated us of the throne, he has brought us out of the heavens, and that is what he is after; because the issue of this state, this overcoming because of the Blood is that "there is no more place for him in heaven". The dragon and all that are his hurled down! How? Ah, not by an objective battle, but because a people have come to the utterness of that position, righteousness which is of faith. They have come there despite every kind of antagonism and opposition, despite all the fury of the red dragon. They have stood there, taken that position, and they have come to the throne. It is against that the enemy is set. How will he achieve his end? Well, he will set the value of the Blood aside. He will do anything to take the mighty testimony of the Blood from the Church. He will somehow get the saints to occupy another position than that of the utter righteousness which is theirs by faith. The Lord save us then in the day of the dragon's fury, maintain us in this position. It is not something romantic. It is going to find us in our secret places. It is going to find us alone. It is going to seek us out in the hour when we are tired, when we are exhausted, when we are not well, when things are discouraging. The enemy will bring up all sorts of pictures and present them and say, You see this and that and that, and take the heart out of us, and then say, Well, you are wrong, you see! Then we begin to say, Well, it must be: we must be wrong or else this would not be! He works so subtly, and with cruelty. The dragon tramples upon the weak and has no mercy upon the feeble. The cruelty of the dragon! Oh, to get that vital faith, the faith of the Son of God! The Lord keep us faithful!

Chapter 2 - The Position of the Overcomer

Reading: Rev. 12

The Assault upon the Church's Life

We are concerned with the "overcomer", and in our previous meditation we were mainly taken up with one of the three aspects of the overcomer, namely, the state which is basic to the whole matter of overcoming, the state of righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ. If that state is so important and means so much to the overthrow of the whole kingdom and power of Satan, the great red dragon of Rev. 12, then his objective will always be to corrupt. We spoke of overcoming him by, or because of, the Blood, which signifies the incorruptible life of the Lord Jesus which is ours through faith. The enemy therefore will seek to destroy our faith relationship to that incorruptible life of which the Blood speaks, and to do this he will endeavour to bring about a condition which is corrupt, thereby to smite us and have ground, judicial, rightful ground before God of accusing us.

Now, we must recognize one thing which it is very difficult to understand and more difficult to explain, that the Word of God does make it perfectly clear that in some way Satan has access to God in relation to His people. That is the significance of the word in Rev. 12 — and, mark you, it has a close connection with the overcomer — "who accuseth them before our God day and night". The Old Testament touches upon that, as we know, in the case of Job and also in that of the high priest, Joshua, where Satan is seen standing at his right hand to be his adversary, his accuser. There are other similar touches, and here right at the end in the Revelation, where the climax of things is being reached, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren which accuseth them day and night. Somehow he has access to God.

That demands two things, as we were seeing in our previous meditation; firstly and primarily, that faith position with regard to the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ; and secondly, that we see to it that the position is not contradicted by our conduct: otherwise Satan has power to strike a blow at the value, the effectiveness, of our position. I do not say that he can destroy the position itself, that is, that he can destroy our acceptance as justified by faith, but he can destroy the effectiveness of it. He can destroy, in other words, the testimony to it; and you must always remember that the testimony is a tremendously important thing. That, of course, is our third aspect, which we shall not reach in this meditation. Thus we have first a state, then a position, and then a testimony. Satan is after the testimony. The testimony comes from the position, and the position comes from the state. Now, Satan is after the state in the first place, and therefore his object is to corrupt. Thus you find that, in the case of each of the churches in the first chapters of Revelation, "to him that overcometh" is the word that is spoken in relation to this particular activity of Satan to corrupt. If you have any doubt about it, look and see for yourself.

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). Here is Satan's desire to get in something hated of God. His object is to corrupt by introducing something that God hates; and, mark you, if there is something in the Church that God hates, Satan's power is established, and God's hand is paralysed. That is what Satan is after.

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). To corrupt! You remember the story. Balaam, who could not bring about a state of condemnation by direct cursing, went round to the back door and taught corruption. If Satan cannot come in and succeed at the front door, he will go round the other way. The end is to corrupt, so that God cannot stand by and behold, and in order that Israel may be robbed of his place as a prince with God. a princely nation to rule.

"So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner" (Rev. 2:15). That very thing to which we have referred in verse 6 is found here. This pernicious doctrine or principle is now within this church at Pergamum and Satan has got the thing hated of God in there, corrupting in that way.

"But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20). We must take these, of course, as symbolical names, not literal

people; something there in principle after the nature and working of Jezebel of old, a link between the people of God and that which is opposed to God in its very nature. Here it is, and Satan has got corruption in. "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments..." (Rev. 3:4). You see what it is here. Again and again, it is defilement, corruption. The enemy is seeking to insinuate it in order to get at the position of the Church, so that the testimony of the Church is destroyed. I think we can best point that out by going on with our next aspect of the overcomer, namely, the overcomer's position.

The Church's Position

We have said that the state of righteousness through faith and righteousness of conduct in accordance with the state lead to the Church's position. What is the Church's position as the result of that state through faith? Well, it is not without significance that, in dealing with the churches, Ephesus comes first. There is a sense in which Ephesus is inclusive and basic. All these churches in Asia came into being through Paul. You look at Acts 19. In the first place it says, in verse 10, "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord". This was as out from Ephesus. Paul is at Ephesus in Acts 19. In verse 26, Demetrius says that not only in Ephesus but in all Asia this man Paul has turned many away. All Asia! Here you have seven churches in Asia. Now, Ephesus is the key, the heart, to the whole thing.

(a) In the Heavenlies in Christ

What then is the Church's place, centrally and supremely? It is what you have in the letter to the Ephesians (so-called), which was an encyclical letter to the churches including that of Ephesus. Well, the Church's place is there seen to be in the heavenlies in Christ. That is the ringing note throughout the letter to the Ephesians. First of all, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; then seated with Him in the heavenlies; then ministry in the heavenlies — "that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies..." So you go on to the end, the warfare in the heavenlies: our wrestling is in the heavenlies. In virtue of a state of righteousness through faith, the Church is represented as having a spiritual position above. Let us beware of the danger of a too geographical and literal idea here, and so of being occupied with glorified and airified nothings. This whole thing is a matter, in the first instance, of a spiritual position, and of spiritual ascendancy, and that is a matter for almost every moment of everyday life. I mean, this whole question of being in the heavenlies comes down very often to such a matter as washing dishes. You can be up in the heavenlies while you are washing dishes, or it can be very much otherwise with you; it depends on the spirit in which you do it. Begin to complain and grumble, This is too menial a work for a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; fancy me having to do this! and you are not in the heavens. But, let your attitude be this: Well this is a very menial job indeed, but let us do all things to the glory of God! and you are in the heavenlies. It is a spiritual matter, a moral matter, a matter of moral power in a spiritual sense. That is the meaning of the heavenlies. It touches every moment of our lives, wherever we are. Do not think you have to escape this mortal body and get on a cloud and fly somewhere away up there! That is not being in the heavenlies.

(b) Ascendancy in Christ over the Power of the Devil

Well now, position: it is a matter of ascendancy over the power of the dragon, the serpent, "he that is called the Devil and Satan", the accuser of the brethren, the deceiver of the whole earth, a matter of spiritual "aboveness"; that is the position of the Church. You can never be there if you are under a spirit of condemnation. If you are under a spirit of accusation, if you are occupied with your own miserable self, you are very much other than in the heavenlies. So that this righteousness which is of faith means a spiritual position of ascendancy over the enemy. This is what it is "to be in the heavenlies".

Now let us get right back with that behind everything. God's thought — and we saw in our previous meditation that the overcomer is the one or the company standing for God's full thought in a day when that full thought has been lost — God's thought concerning His people from before their creation was, and has ever so remained, that they should be a heavenly people.

Everything in the visible creation of God is a representation of some heavenly thought. Remember that. It is not something in itself.

It was never meant to be something in itself. Everything that God has made of a material and visible kind is a symbol, a representation of some spiritual and heavenly thought. Oh, if I were to start on that, we could go on for a very long time, but I will just briefly touch upon it to indicate what I mean.

You find two scriptures, linking Genesis right at its beginning with the advanced revelation of the heart of God in the letter to the Ephesians. The letter to the Ephesians is the fullest revelation that we have of God's eternal thoughts, His counsels. In that letter there comes out in a fuller way than anywhere else in the Scriptures what was in the mind of God before the world was. And then you find that from the second chapter of Genesis a passage is taken up and quoted in Ephesians 5.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32). You have to take Ephesians 5 right back to Genesis 2, and beyond, to see a Divine thought, and this oneness of man and wife is said to be but a symbol, a representation of a Divine thought from all eternity, namely, of Christ and the Church; and Paul says that is a mystery hidden from all ages and generations. It was back in the Divine mind, but it has now been made known. So that human relationships, such as those of husband and wife, are a representation of something in the thought of God, a heavenly something. I only select that as an illustration of what I mean. Anywhere in God's visible creation, you will find the same principle holds good. It is a representation of a spiritual thought, a Divine idea.

Now then, God has created man, not just to have this earth peopled, populated, occupied, but with a spiritual idea, a heavenly thought, to be a heavenly being, to be a heavenly people right at the centre of their being. Heavenliness is the great governing thing in all God's creation and especially in man. Now this is where, if the Lord would give us revelation, it would make such a tremendous difference to us. Oh, this is what Paul meant when he prayed, as we too ought to pray for ourselves and for one another, that He would give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that we might know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. This is the heavenly thing — His inheritance in the saints!

The End of Heavenliness — the Manifestation of God's Glory in the Church

In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, the Apostle uses words like these:

"As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:48). "As is the heavenly" — that is something established. Something is established as heavenly. Then we have the latter part of the sentence: "so also are they that are heavenly". That speaks of conformity to something that is heavenly. Well, this inheritance, this heavenliness, again what is it? What is God's object in creating His universe and especially in creating man? It is no less a thing than the shining forth of His own glory as in His own nature. The shining forth of His nature in its essential glory, the glory of the nature of God, is something before which sinful man must fall helpless, prostrate, broken, impotent. It is God in what He is, His essential nature manifesting itself. He made man for His glory, and he was so made that eventually when God should have perfected him, not only as a physical being but as a moral being through testing, man should be a vehicle through which the moral glory of God should be manifested, and God should have a whole universe manifesting God in what He essentially is in His moral nature. That is glory, unspeakable glory, and all that is brought now to us along the line of redemption in His Son. God has "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Oh, get rid of the physical idea again! The face simply means the presentation; it is the man, the representation, and the glory of God has come in Jesus Christ representatively. Christ moreover is in our hearts, and Christ in us is the hope of glory. What glory? That eventually that people whom God has secured and conformed to the image of His Son should be in the centre of this universe what the sun is in the heavens now, the very centre and fulness of the radiation of God's moral glory. Think of a universe like that! and that too as over against the world in which we are living now. That is what the end is to be. "Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." That is the heavenly thought of God, that is the heavenly people of God, that is the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus.

What a marvellous thing this heavenliness is as a power, as a principle, as a nature! And there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises whereby we may become partakers of the

Divine nature. It is just there of course that Satan has jumped in with all the errors that he has ever propagated, just to turn that thing. The errors of Satan have always borne upon this very matter of the revelation, the manifestation of the nature of God in man. On the one hand, the person of the Lord Jesus Himself has been taken hold of by the errors of Satan and the Divine Sonship has been made something other than it is, less than it is. On the other hand, the companion error is that man is inherently Divine: the end of the evolution is the deification of humanity, the Divine in man. Oh, poor philosophy today! However, let us leave that. You see all the errors that Satan has introduced touching upon this very thing, and I am steering clear of these errors when I speak about the nature of God being manifested in man. It will be in Jesus Christ in man. It will be as we are conformed to the image of God's Son. It will be moral glory, not the glory of Godhead. We are never going to be God, never going to be deified. No, Deity will remain something in itself, Godhead will ever be infinitely apart from the creation, but the moral glory, the moral nature of God in Christ is going to shine forth in the Church throughout all ages, world without end.

Now that is heavenliness, and that is the position to which we are brought morally and spiritually, through a right and adequate apprehension of the righteousness of God through faith. It is a position, a tremendous position, and Satan knows that the end of that means God's end when reached is a universe absolutely purged of all Satan's corruption, and therefore of all his power, and a universe shining through and through with the glory of God.

Satan's Objective — the Nullification of the Church's Position and Warfare through Corruption

What then is ever Satan's objective? To corrupt, and thereby to pull down the Church from its spiritual position. Hence we have such a word as this: "Consider from whence thou art fallen". That is said to the church at Ephesus. "Thou hast left thy first love." Go back to Acts 19 and note that first love. Paul comes to Ephesus, and what happens through his presentation of Christ there? Why, many of them brought their valuable and perhaps priceless books of magic arts and made a great fire of them, and the sum is taken of their value, an immense sum; and it all went up in flames! In a city like Ephesus where Demetrius is so concerned about the profits of trade, where capitalism is such a big factor, where money means a lot, an immense fortune is thus sacrificed. Why? Because they turned to the Lord with all their heart. The testimony of Jesus is accepted and established. What a thing! You remember Paul's talk to the Ephesian elders. What a wonderful disclosure, what a relationship in spiritual things! Well might he, through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, write that letter, which had Ephesus as its base, to go round all the churches in Asia, a letter of heavenly unveilings. What a revelation, what a position! And now to Ephesus in Rev. 2 "Thou hast left thy first love"! You do not value Christ, you do not value the inheritance, you do not value heavenly things as you once did: "consider from whence thou art fallen". Fallen! Here we have spiritual collapse, the work of Satan in bringing down from an Ephesian position. Thus the overcomer is the one or the company that stands for God's full revelation, and God's full revelation is a heavenly people in whom there can be a growing and ultimately full, perfect manifestation of the moral glory of God in this universe. That is the city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, her light like unto a lamp most precious. That is the end to which God is working.

Now, beloved, remember that the rulership of this world and this universe is centred in the heavenlies. Let us not forget that. In this age there are the world rulers of this darkness in the heavenlies. In those heavenlies just now the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness, are operating, and they are doing their work thoroughly. Oh yes, never was a day such as this. The manifestation of the evil work of Satan in the nations, the moral degradation in the nations, is coming out, it is being manifested. The rulership is there in the heavenlies, so far as this world is concerned outside of Christ. I am leaving room for the sovereignty of God over all that, but we are talking about the judicial and rightful government of man, and Satan has it outside of Christ because of man's consent; and man still does consent. The very people who even here in this country deplore the iniquitous procedure that is going on in the world, and who would most loudly and vehemently decry the wickedness of what is going on, if you speak to them along these lines of enthroning Jesus Christ, they would not listen to you. Giving God His place? — that is pious talk! They are going to deal with it in other ways. Satan has such a grip that even those who deplore iniquity do not give God and His righteousness a place. However, that by the way.

Now, the rulership, the moral rulership, is vested in or seated in the heavenlies. The evil hierarchy that is seen there as yet is to yield its grasp, and the destiny of the Church is to take the place of the principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness, to occupy the heavenlies. So in Rev. 12 as we have seen, we have the "overcomers", the "man-child", caught up to the throne of God, and then no more place is found for the red dragon and his hosts in the heavens.

Thus at present there is a spiritual warfare between the Church and the principalities going on in the heavenlies — yes, down in your kitchen! I must say this in order to keep you from becoming nebulous and abstract. Amidst irritating daily work, that is where the battle in the heavenlies is going on. You have not got to reach some geographical point to have a battle in the heavens. It is spiritual and moral. The Church is fighting that battle in daily life.

Then the issue — Satan knows the issue is a very great one. It is his place of rulership over the inhabited earth, the deceiving of the nations, the holding of them bound, the directing of them contrary to God, the opposing of God's end in His own, that is at stake. The Church is fighting that battle spiritually now. The battle is going to be fought and fought and fought within our own spirits. It is a question of whether we in spirit are going to overcome or Satan. It is the position that is in question; government, dominion, rulership.

What then is Satan's objective? In the first place it is to corrupt in order to pull down. It will then be the displacement of believers from their heavenly position, the displacement of the Church... Ours is not some position to which we have to rise, to attain. The letter to the Ephesians does not put it in that way at all. It presents it as an accomplished fact: "hath seated us." Beloved, do grasp this, that if really by faith in Jesus Christ you have, with both hands, apprehended the righteousness of God as yours, you are in the heavenlies, you are above Satan morally. Your business is to hold your position. Satan is not out to keep us down, he is out to hurl us down. We are there. This is a position we have to hold to by faith. So that to dislodge, to displace, will be his object. But oh, just as his ways for corrupting or bringing accusation and condemnation are countless and always beyond our power to anticipate, so are his ways to bring us down, to bring God's people down spiritually and morally from their heavenly position.

The Prophecy of Balaam

What are his schemes, his devices, his cunning? I referred to Balaam. Let us go back to Balaam. When Balaam was hired by Balak to curse Israel, Balaam came and climbed the hill and got to an eminence which overlooked the plain, and there was Israel spread throughout the plain. Balaam wanted to curse Israel in order to paralyse Israel. The hand of God came upon Balaam and under that hand Balaam opened his mouth and began to speak. We will note two things in particular that were said. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Well then, no curse can operate here. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Why? Because there was no iniquity in Jacob? Not at all! There was plenty of unrighteousness in Jacob. Why did He not behold it? Because there was a tabernacle, an altar, a sacrifice and precious blood, a high priest, a Holy of holies and a mercy seat at the centre of their life. They were gathered round that. "He hath not beheld iniquity." Here we are looking upon the figure. Carried over into the New Testament, it is the righteousness of God which is ours by faith in Christ Jesus: not ours inherently, but which we receive in Christ. Well, the curse is nullified as we abide on that ground.

Now the next thing Balaam said was this: "It is a people that dwelleth alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations". Not reckoned among the nations. Oh, that is glorious! That puts Israel not only apart from the nations, but on top of the nations. Now, if there has been one thing which Satan has ever tried to do with the people of God in all ages, it has been to get them reckoned among the nations. I speak solemnly and carefully. Right at the very heart of Christendom as we have it today is the desire to be recognized. Recognition! Everything that organized Christianity does is to gain recognition. What are all these churches? I mean, in this instance, all these elaborate and imposing buildings. They are to gain recognition. They are in order to be reckoned something. To what end is all the procedure, the advertisement, and the much else besides? It is in order to get recognition, to be accredited here on this earth, to be reckoned. Yes, that is Satan's triumph. That is where spiritual power has gone out. That is where the Church has ceased to be something to be reckoned with up there. It has, in spirit, come down here, to be reckoned among the nations. If only

Satan can get the people of God into a position where they are taken up by this world, written up by this world, made something of by this world, he has triumphed and pulled the Church down out of its heavenly place and made it an earthly thing. That is the principle right through the Old Testament. That too is seen to be the trouble in the Revelation. God will not have it. Satan's success is along that line. He has pulled the Church out of the heavens. Somewhere he has made it touch earth, form a link in some way with earth.

All this has behind it this object, to take from the glory of God by involving the Church in that to which God cannot commit Himself, from which God must stand back. Thus to some of these churches the Lord has to say, "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent: I cannot let you go on unless you put this right. You have got down there, you have got mixed up with this other thing which in principle is not Myself, is not My moral glory. You must wholly forsake that and come up and come out of it, or else I must remove your vessel of testimony out of its place. There is no justification for your going on. You are here in this world to be a vessel of the heavenly testimony of the glory of God." That is the object of the Church.

What we have just said does touch us in so many ways, yes, in countless things, this question of being reckoned among the nations in principle, this coming down from the heavenly position. The Lord never meant His Church on this earth to be something that would be taken up by this world, to be something that would be reckoned among the things of this world, recognized and accredited by this world. What He meant, and what obtained when things were right, was that the world itself could not bear the presence of the Church, did not want it. That is the power of the Church to testify against the world.

The whole question runs right through the Scriptures. You see it in Noah, who we are told was "a preacher of righteousness", and of whom it is further said that "being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, (he) prepared an ark to the saving of his house: through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." The presence of the righteous in this world is not with a view to their becoming "au fait" with the world but to condemn it. Oh that the Church had that power today! What will the world do with these? It will do with them just what it did with those of whom mention is made in the book of Revelation. That is what makes them overcomers. "They loved not their life even unto death." That is the cost of being an overcomer. I am not going to attempt to apply this all the way round. You must ask the Lord to show you where the principle applies, how it applies, this heavenliness of the people of God. Listen again to these warnings and exhortations: "Consider from whence thou art fallen"; "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith"; "To him that overcometh..." In piecing the fragments together, this is what is said in effect: Those who preserve and maintain their heavenly position against all the down-drag, enticement, force and fury of the enemy, the adversary, shall come to the throne and reign where the adversary now reigns. That is the issue; a tremendous thing. And then, if it costs everything to be an overcomer, let us remember that they that suffer with Him shall reign with Him, shall be glorified together with Him.

Well, perhaps you have glimpsed a little of the heavenly thought of God and seen what God is working at and toward, what His thought is — a heavenly people. Oh, this is where the Church needs vision! It does indeed need vision. If the Church saw this, what a different Church it would be! The overcomer is that one, or that company, which has vision, which the majority have lost. Ask the Lord to give you vision for the sake of all His Church; for the overcomer — let me say it again — is not someone or something apart, but related to the whole, God's link between His full thought and those who have lost it. That is the overcomer. If the Lord would open our eyes, open the eyes of a number of His people, it would be to the value of the whole Church. Let us ask Him then to answer Paul's prayer for us, "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"! "Now unto him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all ages for ever and ever."

Chapter 3 - The Testimony of the Overcomer

"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).

"...John, who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:2).

"I, John... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9).

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev. 6:9).

"And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17).

"I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

In our previous meditations we have been seeing that there are three aspects to be noted in connection with the overcomer. One is a condition or state, and another a position, and a third a testimony. The condition or state is that of righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is represented by the Blood, the incorruptible life and nature of the Lord Jesus which is ours through faith, a state essential to overcome the Evil One in all his forms and works. A position results from the state, a heavenliness of life, and from that a testimony. We come to this third aspect in our present meditation.

The Overcomers Testimony

These are not three separate things, as we have pointed out. Not one of them can be had without the others, but each leads on to the other. That is to say, the state of righteousness by faith, when rightly and adequately apprehended, results in a position, a heavenly position spiritually, and the position leads to the testimony. If you look at it in the reverse order, the testimony is essentially in virtue of a position, and the position is in virtue of a condition. It is very important to see fully in our hearts the significance of that. The testimony of Jesus is not a statement of truth, not just a declaration of facts, of certain truths about the Lord Jesus, His Person and His work. It may be expressed in language, it may include those facts, it may be something verbally declared, but the testimony of Jesus is not merely that. It is not a formula, a confession of faith drafted in words. The testimony of Jesus which provokes the great red dragon and draws him out in every form of his activity as here set forth — the old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole earth, the accuser of the brethren; representing the manifold activity of the ferocious dragon in his antagonism — the testimony of Jesus which provokes him and brings him into this posture and attitude in which we see him in Rev. 12, I say again, is not a testimony of mere words. It is nothing less than the very embodiment of all those facts in a living spiritual way which registers with such tremendous effect as this in the realm where Satan holds sway. It is the spiritual effectiveness of things which determines whether it is the testimony of Jesus or whether it is some mere statement of truth. The effect that it has upon the enemy is always a fairly safe manner of judging whether it is the true testimony or not. It is a case of the fact or the facts being an inward reality in a person or in a company of the Lord's people. It is the thing which is borne out: not the thing which they say, profess or claim, but the thing which is borne out by their very existence. They are that. This is the testimony of Jesus.

It is because that is so that, in those first chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the victorious, living Lord is challenging the churches concerning their testimony, many commendable things which are mentioned are seen not to be adequate. In some directions, there was no departure from the truth as a statement of doctrine. There was no letting go of the confession of faith, there was still a standing tenaciously to the facts about the Lord Jesus; yes, and many other things quite commendable, and acknowledged as such by the Lord, and yet bringing from His lips that word expressing His dissatisfaction in view of what they stand for — But: "but I have this against thee"; "but thou hast there..."; but! You see, the Lord Himself, when He is taking into account the very

object for which His Church exists, can never be satisfied with the most orthodox and sound statement of doctrine. What He is looking for is the effect of that in the spiritual universe, the power of it as a registration in that realm. It is that which is the testimony of Jesus.

The Nature of the Testimony of Jesus

Well then, we must come to see what this testimony of Jesus is in its nature, that is, its effect. What is the nature of it? What is the testimony of Jesus? Well, comprehensively, it is that Jesus has vanquished Satan, Jesus has overcome the world, and Jesus has destroyed the power of death. That is the testimony of Jesus comprehensively. In His case, that is a fact. In His case, the prince of this world has been cast out, and he that had the power of death has been nullified, and the works of the Devil have been destroyed. In His case, He has overcome the world.

Now the testimony of Jesus is not just a declaration of the facts which are true in His case, but these lampstands on the earth, here and there and there, are the vessels, the very embodiment of that in a living way. That is why the lamp was never to be allowed to go out in the sanctuary, but was to be trimmed night and morning that its flame might be kept clear and triumphant. Therein is typified the embodiment of those facts which are facts in Him, and their being livingly, glowingly expressed here in the Church. That is the testimony, and there is one word which embraces all that. You want to know what the vanquishing of Satan is, the overcoming of the world, and the destroying of death? There is one word which goes right to the heart of it, and it is this, *life*. Life is the sum total of all Christ's being and of His work. He is the life. He comes into the world as the life. He is the offset in His very person to that condition which is universal, namely, death, spiritual death. He is life. His presence is life. Everything about the Lord Jesus now is life; there is no death in Him. In Him death is swallowed up in its entirety. In His very person He is the fullness of that life of God which has nothing in it whatsoever that can be touched by death. His work is that. All the work of the Lord Jesus is related to one thing, and one thing only, and that is life. In Him life and incorruptibility have been brought to light — marvelous revelation of a thought of God! Incorruptibility! What a world, what a universe it will be, when that is the reigning law in everything, everywhere! Incorruptibility! Think of it! Consider how easy it is to corrupt people nowadays, and to corrupt things, and to corrupt procedure. Consider too the result of it. But there is coming a world, a creation, a new heaven and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness which is incorruptible. Incorruptible life will be the reigning law of God's new universe. That is the effect of Christ's work. It is life; just as the sum of all Satan's being and work is death. The presence of Satan is death. The very person of Satan is death. He is death. I do not mean that he is an abstract thing, but he is the very embodiment and personification of death and the effect of all his work is death. He has brought in death. Everything that Satan touches dies. He carried with him the very breath of death.

The testimony of Jesus, then, is this that is seen right at the beginning of the book of the Revelation, where He is presented as the Living One who became dead, but who is alive unto the ages of the ages, and has the keys of death and of Hades. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of death swallowed up in victory, destroyed, as the sum of all Satan's person and work, presence and influence.

Now, that is carrying things right to the ultimate, to the end — the testimony of Jesus! And the overcomer is set for that testimony. The Church was brought into being on the ground of that. Always remember that it was when that had been perfectly accomplished in Christ, and He was installed at the right hand of God as the acknowledgment of the fact that all this was done in Him and through Him and by Him; it was when He was there and the thing was perfect, accomplished, that the Church began, the Church was born. The very life of that new creation, in the person of the Holy Spirit, entered into the Church and made it a living thing. The Church was born when the life came right out from heaven, that life which had conquered death, and the Church's very existence is by reason of the "testimony of Jesus". The overcomer only comes into view when the Church as a whole has fallen short. The overcomer comes in to make up that which is lacking, to recover, to represent and express that which has been lost, to stand for the fullest thought of God. The one thing which is to characterize the overcomer, be it the overcomer individual or collective, is this testimony which is expressed in life.

Now we see why it is important and essential that a position should be occupied for a testimony like that. You have to have a position to be able to express that. You have to be in the position of spiritual ascendancy represented by Paul's word "heavenly", and, in order to occupy that position, you have to be in that state or condition represented by the value of the Blood, the incorruptible nature of the Lord Jesus; and that, of course, through faith.

The Blood the Ground of Life

Now, the ground of all this is the Blood. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." I am not going to take anything for granted and I am going to run the risk of wearying you with repetition of things so well-known. When we quote this passage, Rev. 12:11, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb", let us get our minds completely free from the idea that this overcoming because of the Blood was a matter of using phraseology; that is, that they took hold of the word and began to hurl it in some objective way at the head of the enemy. I know there are times when we must on our knees plead the virtue and value of the Blood against the enemy; but that cannot be done in the same way that a doctor will write out a prescription and apply it in sort of a mechanical way to a certain diagnosed trouble. It cannot be done like that. You have to be in a position for the Blood to be effectual when you appeal to it, a spiritual position. You have to be there in faith, where you in the first place stand utterly upon the ground of His perfect righteousness by faith. That means that every question, doubt, suggestion of being out of fellowship with God has to go. Anything whatever that raises the slightest doubt about your full fellowship with God will cripple you before the enemy. You and I have to be able to take this position before God through faith — ever in faith, knowing as much as we do about the vileness and iniquity of our own hearts: nevertheless, to be able to take this position before God — that even as Christ is there, so are we. His righteousness is the measure of our righteousness. It is a tremendous position, and something that no mortal would ever dare to assume were it not in the Word of God. That is the foundation, and anything whatever upon our conscience which interferes with that is a paralysing thing in the presence of the enemy. We have to get that cleared up first of all on the ground of what the Blood is for us before God, as speaking of an incorruptible life, and equally of course anything upon which the Spirit Himself puts His finger and says, Look here, that is something in which you persist, something in which you act voluntarily of your own volition, and knowingly, which is not according to the mind of God: you must put it away. Otherwise we are defeated in the presence of the enemy and he has the advantage. It is a condition through faith, and walking in the light, which brings us to a position of ascendancy over the enemy, which is the only sure and right ground of testimony, issuing in the testimony. The testimony has that underneath it.

The Blood Effectual through the Cross

So do not let us think of using phrases at the enemy. It is occupying a position which paralyses the enemy, an impregnable position, and all that he can do is to walk round and round trying to find some way in. The Blood is the ground of the testimony. "They overcame him because of (and I think that translation is so much better than "by") the blood of the Lamb." That translation just gets us that much further on in understanding. It is not by using something in an objective way, it is because of something in a subjective way; because of the Blood of the Lamb. Well, you see, that means that the Cross must have become an actuality. The Blood becomes released and effectual by way of the Cross. I mean, that the Cross must have removed all the ground of death for the testimony of the Blood in life to be established. The ground of death is dealt with in the Cross. You see, the specific significance of the Cross in this matter is that there we, in all that we are by nature, have been taken and set aside. That is the Cross. After that you have the living testimony of the Blood. It is another nature; not the nature which has been put away in the Cross, but another nature, His own nature, which goes on in glory — testimony. After the sacrifice has been offered, the Blood is carried through into the Most Holy Place to be an abidingly living testimony, and it is there as witnessing to the fact that all that ground of death in the old nature has been abolished, put away. This Blood in the presence of God says, There is another nature which triumphs over that, triumphs over death, over sin, over the flesh: and therefore over all the power of Satan. That is the present testimony of the Blood.

The Cross, then, must have been appropriated by us. We must have come to the place where we accept our union with Christ in His death to all that is of nature; otherwise there is no living testimony. Any attempt at testimony will be very soon countered by the enemy.

You remember the very familiar story of David, how in his zeal and enthusiasm, and in true devotion to the Lord, he one day called the elders of Israel and the people together, and said, If it seem good to you... let us bring again the ark of our God to us. Yes, it seems quite good; we agree! It is a good thing to do and we are quite sure it will please the Lord. So they arranged the whole matter. They had a cart made for the ark, and they got the ark and put it on their new cart and started on their way with a great deal of enthusiasm and zeal, sure that they were serving the Lord: and on the way the oxen stumbled — for that sort of thing is sooner or later bound to come up against difficulties — and Uzza put forth his hand to steady the ark; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him and he died there before the Lord. David was grieved with the Lord that day and said, "How shall I bring the ark of God home unto me?" And the ark was turned aside into the house of Obed-edom and was there a long time. Then the next chapter opens in an altogether new realm. David calls for the sanctifying of the Levites and says, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God..." Later in the chapter we read that David said, "Because (the Levites) bare not the ark at the first, the Lord made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

Well now; what do the Levites represent? Just the opposite of what Uzza represents. What is Uzza doing? Well, Uzza is one of the custodians of a nice little programme of work for the Lord. The first thing is, We will have a conference and discuss how to do this nice thing for the Lord! We have got our cart, our nice bit of mechanical contrivance; we are going to work for the Lord! But hardly have they embarked upon the proposition before death breaks in, death in something that has been done with the best of motives and greatest enthusiasm for the Lord. The end of that thing is death. It bears all the marks of nature, conferring with flesh and blood about the Lord's interests, to begin with; of having man's conceptions put into some shape for the carrying out of the Lord's work, and then of man taking responsibility and having his hand upon things. It is the realm of death even in the service of the Lord.

The Levites came in as exactly the opposite of that. They carried the ark upon their shoulders, not upon a cart. Levites are those who represent the fact that all the ground of nature has been put aside as being the ground of death. The testimony represented by this work is the testimony of Jesus, which is essentially the testimony that death has been swallowed up in victory. It is a contradiction of that testimony if you bring in a cart, if you bring in human counsels, if you bring in Uzza's hand. That is nature, that is man, that is the old creation. Bring that alongside of the testimony of Jesus and you have a contradiction, and God will not stand by a contradiction. Death will smite that thing.

If you are to have the testimony of Jesus established, everything has to be consistent with that testimony. You will remember that in the consecration of the Levites there were three offerings; the sin offering, in which it is declared that this old creation is destroyed from the presence of God; and then the burnt offering, with its meal offering mixed with oil, declaring that here is another nature, the perfected sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus, and His service and sacrifice, which is accepted by God; and that is the ground of Levitical acceptance, consecration and service, and it is that principle that comes in. It is what the Lord Jesus is that is the ground of service, not our nice counseling and conferences about how to do the work of the Lord, not our contrivances for the Lord's interests: it is Christ conducting everything, governing everything. That is life. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of life, and everything must be consistent with that, which means that all that we are by nature must have been put out by that sacrifice, that offering, that Cross, slain and consumed, and it is only Christ that is here.

It was just upon that point that the Lord was lighting all the time in His dealings with the seven churches in Asia. "Not what you are doing for Me, beloved Ephesus: I know your patience, your labour: I know. But it is not a matter of what you are doing for Me, even in your enthusiasm, your devotion, your patient labours; it is whether I Myself, in the power of My risen life, am transcendent in your midst, whether in the realm of Satan the effect is felt of the testimony that I have defeated

him and destroyed his power in death". That is the thing that matters. That is all in the Blood, and that is the ground of life.

The Lesson of the Candlestick

Now, a word in closing. Do remember that, while there is a change from the candlestick or lampstand of the Holy place in the tabernacle to the lampstands in the churches in Asia, the principle is the same. The principle is the testimony of Jesus, the same in both cases. Now, when you go back to the tabernacle and look in the Holy place at that lampstand or seven-branched candlestick, what have you there in type? First of all, in the case of the lampstand, you have the light thrown upon itself. That was one thing very definitely prescribed or said about it, that the light of the candlestick would illumine the candlestick itself; it would stand in its own light, in its own testimony. Then, in addition, the light would be thrown upon the table of shewbread, and, further, on the altar of incense. It would illumine its own vessel and it would illumine all else there

Now, here is something very precious, because, let us note, the principle is carried over to Revelation. It is the same thing in testimony. That lampstand or candlestick, with its central stem and its six branches, that seven-branched candlestick, is a figure of Christ and His Church. The New Testament designation is the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head, the centre and supreme factor. His Church is of one piece with Him, one Body, all sharing His One Spirit, the one oil — one testimony, the testimony of Jesus. But this living flame of the candlestick, which is to be preserved clearly, and continuously, falls upon the whole candlestick or vessel itself, and says that the testimony of Jesus must be in a living Body, and the Body itself must be in the light of the testimony, radiant with its own testimony. It must not be holding up a light for other things and other people and itself be in the dark. It must not be declaring in words "Jesus lives" and itself be dead. It is the livingness of the Church itself which is the testimony; that it is not only found holding out truth to the world, but is in the good of that truth itself; that it is not only saying, Jesus has conquered death and lives, but also saying, I am in the good of that, I am here as a living witness to that, for the light can shine upon me. The Church must be able to bear the light of the testimony itself; to take that light, draw it on itself and say, I am not saying things which are not true with regard to myself, I am the living expression of that doctrine.

Beloved, when we speak of the Church, let us remember that we are members of His Body and that what is true in the whole has to be true in every part. This is the overcomer. I have to ask myself in the light of this, Am I an overcomer? You have to ask yourself the same thing. Are you an overcomer? Can the light of this testimony fall upon you and find you able to stand up to it? Can we say, He lives, He has conquered death! not only as a statement concerning the Lord Jesus in heaven, but as a testimony that is sustained in each of us in what we are? Can we each one say, The power of that risen life is working in me; I know the power of His risen life? Has God made me know it through experience in the depths? Have I known what it is to come up in the power of His resurrection again and again? Do I know what it is for the onslaughts of death to be vanquished by the life of the risen Lord in me? Can we say that? That is the overcomer. No church can have that testimony beyond the measure in which the individual members thereof have it. One thing you and I, as members of any local church, must have our hearts continually set upon is this: O Lord, keep us from becoming merely a vessel or vehicle of doctrine: make us to be characterized by the life, so that others coming in, whether they understand what is said or not, exclaim, I do not understand it all, but there is life: I met the living Lord there! I would sooner people went away without their ever having understood a word but able to say that, than for them to have grasped things mentally and to have felt no impact.

Let us pray that the Lord will make us overcomers individually and as a company, in this sense, that the testimony shall not be merely something that we are holding out to the world, to the Church, but a testimony whose light can fall upon us and we can stand in the light of our own testimony unashamed.

That light fell upon the table of shewbread, and it declared the testimony of Jesus as to a living humanity, a Man after God's own heart, who is our sustenance, our life, our support, our food. We live because He lives. That is the signification of the shewbread: we live because He lives. Thus the light falls upon the shewbread, and testifies of Christ our life. Then the altar of incense testifies to

our having a clear way through to God, an open heaven, communion with God in the risen living Christ. That is the testimony of Jesus. There is nothing merely doctrinal about that. To live because He lives, to live upon Him, and to have a way through Him unto the Father of clear access livingly; that is the testimony of Jesus, and it needs to be recovered in greater fullness amongst the Lord's people. Do pray about this, and about your own participation in it, that the life whereby Jesus conquered death shall be a reality in you and through you.

Chapter 4 - A Heart Matter

"...having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what... the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18).

"...in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

"And it came to pass, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah dwelleth under curtains. And Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thy heart, for God is with thee" (1 Chron. 17:1-2).

"And David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto Jehovah, and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men" (1 Chron. 11:16-19).

"And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king: to whom also he bare witness and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will" (Acts 13:22).

"Jehovah, remember for David all his affliction: How he sware unto Jehovah, and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids; until I find out a place for Jehovah, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Psa. 132:1-5).

"The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." "Ye... are builded together for (or into) a habitation of God..." That is the New Testament basis of our meditation, but we turn to the Old Testament to see that foreshadowed in the first book of Chronicles chapter 17, "It came to pass when David dwelt in his house..." You know what the Lord told Nathan to say to David, but it does not change the position. It only means that David himself personally was not allowed to build the house, and when that has been made clear the Lord says some very precious and gracious things to David. The Lord tells David that He will build him a house, and that He will establish his son upon his throne forever, and many such gracious things, in the presence of which David goes down on his face, so to speak, before the Lord, and says, "Who am I and what is my house...?". Then chapter 18 begins in this way: "Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab"; and so on.

Now all that can find its place in Rev. 12:11. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death." You may not see how it all fits in or is there, but I think we shall very soon.

There is one thing upon which the present emphasis is to be laid in connection with the overcomer, and it is this, that the matter of the overcomer is a heart matter. When we have said everything that we can say about the overcomer, it all comes back to that, that it is a heart matter.

The link between the letter to the Ephesians written by Paul, of which the fragment we have read is a sample, and the message written by John in Patmos to Ephesus, is quite clear to us. We have seen, in the first place, that the revelation given consisted, in a word, in this, namely, in the eyes of their heart being enlightened by a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The message to Ephesus in the second chapter of Revelation is, "Thou hast left thy first love; consider from whence thou art fallen". It is a heart matter, and the heart matter has to do with that which is most precious to the Lord Himself. It is a matter of having the heart set fully, utterly and strongly upon that which is, in the Lord's mind, the object that is of greatest account to Him. There is no fragment of Scripture which sets that forth more fully and perfectly than this little fragment, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints". It is what the Lord's heart is set upon. It is what is precious to the Lord. The overcomer has got a long way beyond the position where it is his own inheritance, his own blessing, that is uppermost. He has come to a place where it is no longer a matter of things, of blessings and so on. There is but one thing before him, namely, the Lord having what He requires, what He needs, what He desires, what His heart is set

upon; not our inheritance, but His. That is the overcomer and it is a matter of the heart. It is jealousy of heart for God's interests, for God's fullest thought to have expression and realization. Wherever you look at the overcomer in type or reality, you find that is the thing which most deeply characterizes him. It is a heart matter.

A Man after God's own Heart

Let us mark this in the case of David. He has now come to mature years, and has a great deal of history with God lying behind. He is sitting in the presence of the blessings and mercies which have come to him through the grace of God, and as he sits, this is the direction and the form of his meditation: I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah under curtains. This will never do! David's heart position at that time is disclosed in Psalm 132, "Surely I will not enter into my house, my house of cedar; I will not go up into my bed, I will not give slumber to my eyelids, till I have found a place for the ark of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord." David has sworn. There is the uncovering of David's heart, and that is the key to David's life. From the introduction of David to the end of his life, you find that to be the whole matter.

His introduction, you remember, was in connection with Goliath, and you find him there jealous for the Lord's name, jealous for the Lord's interests. It was not for Israel as Israel that he went out. It was the Lord. "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied."

Again, when Samuel is commanded to anoint the successor of Saul and the sons of Jesse are made to pass before him while David is yet absent, the Lord restrains Samuel, when he would have anointed the eldest, with the words, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature... the Lord looketh on the heart. Once more it is the heart of which mention is made.

So it is to the end. Nathan says to David, "Do all that is in thine heart". Nathan was a good man and had a great place of honour in the life of David. Nathan was a man who could rebuke a king, and whose rebuke could be taken without bad feeling; and Nathan, because he knew David's heart, was able to say in face of all his faults and failures, and dishonourable conduct on occasion, "Do all that is in thine heart".

Then there comes out this great testimony to David: "I have found David a man after my heart." How can this be? Look at David and his sin with Uriah. Look at David numbering Israel and bringing upon the whole nation devastation. Yes, look again at David in weakness bringing back Absalom the murderer, without any repentance on the part of the murderer, purely on the ground of natural affection, overlooking moral responsibility. Is this a man after God's own heart? Ah, these are the failures and weaknesses of the man, but right at the heart of that man there is something God sees which remains all through his life. This man has an eager, consuming jealousy for the Lord's interests, to find out a place for the testimony. He is consumed with the zeal of God's house. It is God's inheritance that is dear to David's heart: therefore he is the man after God's own heart.

The Overcomer Characterized by the Same Feature

We read the incident about the three mighty men of David. It is only a sidelight on the same principle. David one day yearned for something with a great longing, and said, "Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" And the three mighty men broke through the garrison of the Philistines, put their lives in jeopardy, and brought of the water of the well for David. They were "overcomers". What was it that made them overcomers? They discerned something in the heart of their lord and king, and it was for that they counted not their lives dear unto them even unto death. You see the principle.

The overcomer is not someone who stands for a special kind of teaching called "overcomer truth", or one who belongs to a certain body of people who talk about "the overcomer". The overcomer is one or a company of such as have in their hearts this one all-governing, all-dominating passion, not that they may have blessing and things, but that God may have His full satisfaction in His people; those who have seen with opened eyes what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints means

and have set their *hearts*. Note again the language: "The eyes of your *heart* being enlightened that ye may know..."

The overcomer only comes into view at a time when the Lord's people generally have lost the vision and the position, so that this matter is always found to be locked up with a comparatively small company. The others may be the Lord's people and they may be very devoted to the things of the Lord, but so often their quest and their interest is a matter of blessing, of this kind or that.

Sometimes it is that of spiritual power, and their prayer is always for power. They mean, of course, quite truly, power for service, power in order to serve the Lord better, to be more used. Well, it may be that or some other specific blessing. But, you see, they are after *things*. Oh how many there are who pray for revival! I am not saying it is wrong to pray for power or revival, but so many of the saints are occupied with things like that. They are quite good, but it is something different; not wrong, but it is different.

The Real and the Unreal

In reading the Word recently, I was impressed as I came on two things. One of these was Elijah's great battle for what we might call revival on Carmel. You know the story of that tremendous fight with Baal worship, which had become well-nigh universal. As the altar was set up and Jehovah was called upon and the fire fell and there was a great, mighty demonstration of Divine power and attestation, this same people at once shouted, "Jehovah, He is God! Jehovah, He is God!" You may call that a great revival, and all the people are shouting, "The Lord is with us; we are for the Lord! Jehovah, He is the Lord, and we are on His side!" And a very short while afterward, Elijah is in despair. I do not believe this was all because of what Jezebel said. She may have been the arrow of Satan directed at Elijah at what we call a psychological moment, but I do not believe that accounted for everything. I believe there may have been another factor (I cannot prove it, but it is very true to principle), namely this, that Elijah was well aware of the fickleness of the people. He heard them shouting, he saw them acclaim Jehovah, but he knew this people. It is only because something has happened in an outward, objective way, only because the Lord has given a manifestation and a demonstration of His power that they are there shouting like that. Elijah knew the fickleness of this people, knew how unstable they were, and in his heart he was not satisfied. So you find him in a great state of despair and pouring out his complaint to the Lord. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars"; and so on. Do you notice (and this is the thing that struck me) it is not until after the happenings of Carmel, not until after the people have shouted, "The Lord, He is God", that the Lord says to Elijah, "I have yet seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal". I wonder if you see the significance of that. To me that was a revelation. You know, beloved, the people who can come in crowds in a day when the Lord is doing something outwardly, in a day of revival, are not overcomers. They are there because something is happening. It is something deeper than that God wants. It is the knee that never did bow to Baal, not that has to come into revival; that never needed revival, but was with God in the secret when everything else was going wrong. It is impressive, if it is true, that Elijah's heart was saying, "Yes, this is all very well; they can come out like this when there is a demonstration, when power is being manifested, but, oh, they will not stand! If things go wrong and all the outward signs disappear, they will fall away again. What I want is something deeper than that, but I cannot find it". The Lord says, I have it! Seven thousand who are not shouting, whose hearts have been with Me all the way through. They never needed revival; they have been true at heart.

Now alongside of that, as only another illustration of the same thing, I came on that revival in the days of Josiah, the last great revival in Israel. There was something of a revival under Hezekiah, but Josiah called together all Israel, and they all came up from their towns and their villages and had a great celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem. Of this occasion it was said, "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (2 Chron. 35:18). Oh, revival! But when that whole thing has been presented, and everything has been said that can be said about the thoroughness of it, about the enthusiasm of it, there comes this terrible statement immediately upon the description of that seemingly so genuine a thing, "Yet the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath". I thought, that is an anti-climax! That is spoiling everything! All this great day of revival, with the people right in it, and it looks all so genuine and so wonderful;

and then it says immediately upon that, "Yet the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath": and stronger things than that follow. The Lord wants something more than revival, the enthusiasm of revival. Overcomers are not those people. What the Lord wants is a heart-state which has not departed from Him; not those who are caught up in a great movement, but those who have been true at heart right the way through. Is that not true to the New Testament, to the book of the Revelation? Is not that what the Lord presents there? It is, those who, in the midst of declension, are true to the Lord's full thought; not those who have to be recovered by outward demonstrations and signs, but those whose hearts are steadily and firmly set upon His inheritance, that the Lord may have what He is after.

The Challenge and Possibilities of a Supreme Devotedness to the Lord Himself

Now, I think I have brought in enough data to make the point very clear and emphatic. What then arises from all this? What are we after? Do we really mean business with God? Are our hearts wholly set upon all that the Lord's heart is set upon? Now, brother, sister, accept that challenge, allow that question. A good many things will happen if that be true. The Lord can strip us if necessary, to obtain His end, if our hearts are set upon that end. We shall love not our lives unto the death, if our hearts are set upon the Lord's end, the Lord's full end. We shall have no arguments, no debates, we shall not set as our standard and our limit anything or anyone less than the Lord Himself. No one who has his heart so set upon all that the Lord wants will ever say, Well, So-and-so is a very godly man and he does this and that: why should I do otherwise? Oh, how many battles we have with people on that line! Some of the outstanding battles in my experience with people have been of that kind. Beloved, let me say with all solemnity and love, if that is your standard, you are going to fall far short of God's standard. You and I must never appeal even to the most holy and godly man that has ever lived on this earth as our standard. You must recognize that God has never yet allowed a man outside of His Son on this earth to be infallible, and He has taken infinite pains to show that. David, declared to be a man after His own heart, has had none of his failures covered up by God. They are written in God's Word and for thousands of years they have been there for all to see. There never has been a man whose weakness God has hidden, though that man may have been the most used of God. God forbids us to make any man or woman our standard.

The heart of the one who is really going to come to God's fullest thought will always go far beyond the best they know here. There will be no arguing, no debating. The attitude will always be, Well, Lord, if that means something more for You in me, I am ready, I am willing. All I desire is that You should have all You can in me. That is the overcomer. It is a heart matter. We shall be prepared to let go our prejudices, our preconceptions. We shall let go our pig-headedness! The question for us will always be this, and it will govern: Lord, is this the way of Your fullest thought? If it is, then no matter how strongly I may have thought otherwise, my thoughts must go. No matter how much I may have wanted it otherwise, my wants must go. My likes must not stand in the way. Lord, what are You after, what do You want? That clears the ground for the Lord. Ephesians is the highest revelation that we have in the Bible, and the supreme thing to which we are brought by Ephesians, as we have seen, is this: "...having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what... the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Now, that brings about the overcomer position in the end. This Man-child of Revelation 12 is caught up unto God and to His throne. "To him that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne". In the book of Joshua, you have Israel's inheritance, but you have no king. When you come over to Kings and Chronicles and Samuel, you have a king, you have a throne, but it is no longer Israel's inheritance, it is God's inheritance. David embodies that. He is the king and he is the embodiment and personification of this thing. "I will not enter into my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah." That is kingship, that is the throne, that is the principle of the throne. We may be the Lord's people and we may be doing a lot for the Lord, and we may want to further the Lord's interests; and we may, in so doing, be occupied with things rather than the Lord Himself. Oh, for the vision to come to the Lord's people which lifts them clean away from things as such, even though they be spiritual things, and brings them to that thing which the Lord is after — the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints: the Lord having the full glory and satisfaction, so that the end is "Now unto Him be the glory in the Church". "Unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus"; or, in

other words, "The God of peace make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight". You see, it is what the Lord is. Are our hearts there? That is the heart of the whole matter of the overcomer. Unto that the counting not our lives dear unto death may mean any one or more of a hundred or a thousand things. Let us get away from literal martyrdom as the only interpretation of that. Oh, we may have to suffer many kinds of martyrdom. We may have to go to Him without the camp bearing His reproach. We may have to suffer misrepresentation, misinterpretation. We may have to suffer ostracism and all kinds of things, in order that the Lord might have His fullest thought. All that is equally the path of the overcomer.

I am not saying you will not get to heaven if you are not an overcomer, but what the Lord is appealing for is that which is necessary and peculiarly precious to Him, the overcomer who brings Him His own satisfaction, who answers to that upon which His heart has been set from all eternity, coming into line with His inheritance. That is why we put the other passage in Ephesians alongside of the first: "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." — "Ye are builded together into a habitation of God." David's heart was set upon a habitation of God in which the glory of God could be displayed, and so it was out of David's heart exercise that Solomon built the temple; and the glorious consummation is, that the glory of Jehovah so filled the house of Jehovah that even the priests could not remain inside because of the glory. The Lord filled the place with His own glory, and man had no place in it, not even the servants of the Lord. We are builded together for a habitation of God, that He might have the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. It is a heart matter.

Now, if you do not understand everything, if you cannot remember everything, do take the key to it all. The whole question for the overcomer can be expressed like this: It touches everything; I am going to ask the Lord that all that is involved in it shall be really brought up in my life! The heart of the matter is this, that the Lord must have all that He wants and can have in me and through me, whatever it costs. The Lord must get His inheritance. I am set, not for things, not for what I want, not for what I like, but for what the Lord is after. Oh, ask the Lord to bring you under the government of that jealousy, that concern, that heart passion: and it is no small reward. For me, it would be the greatest reward that anyone could give for the Lord to be able to say, "A man after My heart". Do you covet that? "A man after My heart"! Oh yes, what men we are! Like David, like Elijah, who were men of like passions with ourselves; full of failure, breakdown, shame — yes; but of whom God, looking within, can say, despite it all, Ah, there is a heart that is set upon My glory, that is jealous for My fullest thought, "a man after My heart". I say, that is all the reward I want, if the Lord can say that. May we be found such.

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