

THE PROGRESSIVE LIFE

The Seven Overcomeths

By

Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

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God's Ambassador

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THE PROGRESSIVE LIFE

or

The Seven Overcomeths

By Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." -- 1 John 5:4

God's Revivalist
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GOD'S AMBASSADOR

"He held the lamp each passing day,
So low that none could miss the way,
And yet so high to bring in sight
That picture fair of Christ the Light,

That, gazing up, the lamp between,
The hand that held it was not seen!
"He held the pitcher, stooping low,
To lips of little ones below;

Then raised it to the weary saint,
And bade him drink when sick and faint!
They drank; the pitcher them between,
The hand that held it was not seen!

"He blew the trumpet, soft and clear,
That trembling sinners need not fear,
And then with louder note and bold,
To storm the walls of Satan's hold;

The trumpet, coming thus between,
The hand that held it was not seen!
"And when our Captain says, 'Well done!
Thou good and faithful servant, come!

Lay down the pitcher and the lamp;
Lay down the trumpet, leave the camp,'
Thy weary hands will then be seen
Clasped in His pierced ones, naught between!"

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PREFACE

How wonderful is the Bible! I have read it through and through, and yet every time it is fresh, deep, broad and inexhaustible. For example, I have read many times the account of "The seven churches which are in Asia." But during our second missionary tour in South Africa, my soul was greatly refreshed while reading it again.

As a result, we gave talks on the Progressive Life. Many have desired these studies in book form and we now present them, though in rather crude setting. Trusting that God may be glorified and the reader enriched, I am Yours for Souls in Every Land,

E. E. Shelhamer.
God's Bible School
Cincinnati, O. May 16, 1935

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Chapter 01

THE OVERCOMING LIFE

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." -- 1 John 5:4

The overcoming life is the ideal life. The mastery of every outward and inward suggestion to evil is a great victory. Many would give everything they possess to have it. Who would not consider it a great honor to be at the head of an army of one hundred thousand men! Think of it! Power to compel the surrender of a great city! Serving notice on said city that it must surrender inside of two hours or be bombed; but that if they send, by a prominent citizen, the keys of the city, including those of all the vaults in the national banks, they will be spared. But I can think of a larger commission, where every man, woman and child can be entrusted with a greater power than that of taking a city. It reads something like this: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." -- Prov. 16:32

This overcoming business is a mighty business! In ancient times the victor or conqueror in a battle was crowned and clothed with gorgeous apparel. He was dined at the king's table and given the daintiest of food. In like manner he who overcomes his three great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall reap here and hereafter great enjoyments and lasting honors.

Doctrinally speaking, in the work of justification we are made overcomers. The Apostle Paul says we have "peace with God" and are enabled "to stand and withstand" all the darts of hell. The chief difference between justification and entire sanctification is not on the outside but the inside. Justification should correct all outside conduct; while the work of heart purity should eliminate all inside trouble. In short, in the first blessing we get victory over everything; while in the "second blessing," as John Wesley put it, we get deliverance from everything. In justification we receive something we never had before -- we get all the graces of the Spirit; while in entire sanctification we get rid of something we always had -- we get rid of carnality.

Again, in the work of regeneration we receive a kingdom. "Lo, the kingdom of God is within you!" You have heard shallow preachers instruct seekers, saying, "Perhaps you are expecting too much." How absurd! God bless you! We are to receive a kingdom; and if so, it is no cheap, ethereal thing. A kingdom worthy of the name is supposed to have a king, and this king is supposed to be empowered to suppress all internal uprisings and at the same time resist successfully all outside attacks. Yea, more, he is supposed not only to suppress all internal and outside attacks, but at the same time keep up a vigorous commerce upon the seas. For instance, King George of Great Britain is supposed to do all these things. But, with all his power, no doubt he is painfully conscious that within his kingdom there are unruly subjects that must be suppressed and kept under rule; else they may work ruin and death.

In like manner, this is what takes place in a genuinely converted heart. When the kingdom of God is set up within, immediately this convert finds himself empowered through grace to suppress all unholy

tempers, resist the attacks of the devil from without, and, blessed be God, go up stream doing great business for his Lord. In short, Christ is already crowned within, but there is a vast difference between Christ reigning, and His reigning without a rival. In regeneration Christ reigns, swaying the scepter of righteousness over the domains of that newly-born soul; and he who was once defeated is now victor and overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil. Nevertheless, he is greatly grieved and pained that at times he finds within him enemies that must be suppressed and kept under lock and key, lest he again suffer defeat.

Hear the great and godly George Fox, founder of the Friends or Quaker church. He preached "second-blessing holiness" long before there were any Methodists. This proves that no one sect has a copyright on any special doctrine or blessing; it also proves that God must and will have a witness, and if one church fails, He will raise up another. Listen to George Fox's testimony: "I knew Jesus and He was very precious to my soul" -- conversion. "But I found something within me that would not keep sweet and patient and kind at all times" -- carnality. "I did what I could to keep it down, but it was there" -- suppression. "Then when I gave Him my whole will and heart, He came and took out all that would not be sweet, all that would not be patient, all that would not be kind" -- eradication. "Then He shut the door" -- preservation. Hallelujah!

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Chapter 02

THE BABYHOOD STATE

There are certain key words characteristic of certain writers in the Bible; e. g., the key word to Hebrews is "better things"; the key word to James is "works"; Paul uses the terms "death" and "crucifixion" more than all the other writers put together; while John has two significant words "love" and "overcometh". The word "overcome" is used seven times in his Gospel and First Epistle, and sixteen times in the Book of Revelation.

And now we come directly to the study of these seven churches in Asia. No doubt there were others, yea, many other churches, but these seven were perhaps more directly related to the Apostle; or they may have been representative churches typical of the entire church upon earth. They may also represent seven periods in church and world history. But, in this study, we are confining ourselves to the practical development of personal, Christian experience. After all, this is the most profitable study.

Many great minds have written and preached about the mysteries in the Book of Revelation; we have heard many capable ministers discourse on the same, and scarcely two of them agree. And it may be that with this humble treatise some may take issue. Hence, we beg your forbearance and trust that before the reader finishes, he may be greatly profited, enriched and enlarged.

You will observe by a close study of these seven churches that only two are exempt from reproof. And, where a reproof is given, you will find that the Holy Spirit first commends all He possibly can before giving the needed rebuke. Oh, that we might take a lesson here as parents, teachers and preachers.

Eating

In chapter two and verse seven we have the first and lowest degree in the overcoming life -- "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Here the key word is "EAT." Mark! "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." Millions of people have ears who do not listen to the voice of the Spirit. The soul could be said to have five senses the same as the body; e. g., we read, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." Here we have soul taste and soul sight. Again, "Delight thyself also in the Lord." Here we have soul feeling. Again, "Incline your ear ... hear, and your soul shall live." Here we have soul hearing. The new-born soul that is quickened by the Spirit will hear wonderful things when there is no audible sound.

A babe lives in the realm of "eating". See him lying there in his little crib? His mentality is very limited. He is innocent, but not spiritual, for no one is spiritual until quickened by the Holy Spirit. But look at that baby! Two-thirds or more of his time is spent in eating and sleeping; it must be so. And, long before he can recognize his own father or mother -- yea, long before he can measure the distance from one side of his crib to the other, nature teaches him a wonderful secret; namely, the right angle of his arm. Put something into his little hand; it may be coal, carpet tacks or carbolic acid, and the dear little ignorant thing does not bring that tiny hand to his eye or ear or chin, but directly to the little mouth.

And this is a characteristic of a young convert. He lives in the realm of his emotions. He looks forward to the prayer meeting and revival services with the chief thought, "I am going to feel good and enjoy myself." He may be twenty or forty years of age, but nevertheless, this is his chief thought, how he may be happy here and hereafter. Mr. Finney declared that we are so supremely selfish that God is compelled to appeal to our selfishness in order to get us to take the first step toward Heaven. We do not seek God because He is worthy but to escape hell and gain Heaven. However, before we become mature saints we must outgrow this and love God, not for His gifts or a future reward, but because He merits our adoration.

Madame Guyon said she could bear with the infirmities and vacillation of young converts just as she could with a child, but she said that it was hard to do so with old heads that ought to know better.

O friend, are you still in your baby clothes? If so, it is perfectly consistent that you should enjoy eating, drinking and being dandled and petted for the mere pleasure you get out of it; but sooner or later you are expected to outgrow this.

Just think a moment how much of your precious time is spent in praying for and taking care of self. With a baby this may be necessary, but surely it is not God's first plan that you should spend about two-thirds of your time thus. Oh, that this might be reversed, that you might outgrow your infant ways and begin to live the outpoured life.

One old writer said, "When the struggle for existence begins, the opportunity for usefulness ends." How true! Yes, as long as you are struggling just to keep afloat, you cannot help others very much. You should, through grace, so master every difficulty and overcome every temptation that you will have something left to impart to others. Yea, blessed be God, you can be such an overcomer that you are more than a match for anything that men or devils can trot out.

We read of an experience in grace where one will not everlastingly be calling for something to eat. Listen: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Say, friend, why not get beyond the babyhood state where you are so well fed and filled that you have more than you need for yourself and can draw out your soul to the hungry?

Is it not wonderful that now through the Atonement or "At-one-ment", we are invited back into the garden to partake of the "tree of life" which is in the midst of the Paradise of God, from which Adam and Eve were driven because of their disobedience? Yes, our wonderful Redeemer has made a blessed success of everything He undertook. And what did He undertake? He undertook to make null and void the work of the devil, and now through His wondrous grace we are permitted to pass under that flaming sword and partake of the tree, from which our impatient fore-parents were driven.

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Chapter 03

THE CHILDHOOD STATE

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." -- Rev. 2:11

Here we have the second stage in Christian development -- the childhood state. Babies live in the realm of eating and sleeping, but children from two to ten years of age are in the period of stumbling, falling and getting up again. The principal thing we hear of them is not, "I want the milk bottle," but, "I got hurt;" "Kiss it, mamma, kiss it;" "Johnny pushed me down, mamma;" "Willie threw sand in my face;" "I'll not play marbles any more with Sammy!" Such is childhood.

It is a wonderful thing to be weaned. An unweaned child, especially one that is spoiled, can keep an entire house in an uproar. But I read of a better condition. Hear it: "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast." Friend, you can have this experience, where you will be a man of sound knowledge, able to understand deep truths.

Strange, and very sad, that many big children, yea, gray-haired ones, are so easily hurt; they live where their feelings are sticking out in every direction. Oh, that they would read and digest Psalm 119 :165, "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." In other words, nothing shall get them "out of fix". Is it not wonderful to find a person who was formerly very touchy and irritable, but who is now so fully saved that he never gets out of fix? He is like a cube; you can kick and tumble that cube over and over, and when you get through tumbling it it is always right side up.

Say, brother, it is impossible for you to act sour until you first feel sour; it is impossible for you to say a cutting word until you first nurse a sore feeling; it is impossible for you to break fellowship with the brethren until you first begin to justify yourself and condemn them. It is impossible for a girl or a boy to go astray until he first thinks along that line. Satan, no doubt, takes as much satisfaction in seeing a man entertain an unholy thought as when he, ten years later, falls into gross sin. For it is impossible down the line there to do an unseemly act unless previously there has been the entertaining of the unholy thought.

We read, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Do you hear? You are no better than your thoughts! No difference how nice and saintly you appear when in public and upon the platform, you are no better than your secret thoughts when nobody is looking at you.

Oh, what a place the Judgment will be. There men and women will get a higher reward for holy desires than holy actions! For sometimes one performs a good act or refrains from a bad one, largely to protect his reputation and standing with men. But when one repudiates every ignoble suggestion and substitutes that which is uplifting and benevolent, being inwardly conscious that no one sees or knows except the Omnipotent gaze, this is praiseworthy indeed. This is why some men grow tall and others shrink up -- because of what goes on inside without the nearest friend suspecting the same.

The immortal Wesley said, "The ill usages and affronts and the losses and the crosses are better means to growth in grace than when everything is according to your liking." Friend, have you learned this deep lesson? If so, instead of whining and seeking human sympathy why not rejoice that God has seen fit to permit a little suffering on your part that you may become more fully settled and rooted in God!

Hear me! You are to blame if you allow yourself to get "hurt" about anything. True, you will be cognizant of the fact when you are insulted and ostracized. Yes, you may feel deeply grieved. But I declare to you upon the authority of God's Word that you can be so well saved that you refuse to take offense. Yea, grant that you were not to blame; grant that the other person was totally at fault; yet the moment you allow yourself to become distant and critical towards the offender, you are to blame and certainly need more grace. If God commands you to love your enemies and pray for those who despitefully use you, do you not suppose He has grace sufficient to enable you to carry out that command? He certainly has!

Wesley said again, "Let all you think and say and do prove that you are little, and mean, and base in your own eyes." Now, if you have such a small opinion of yourself, you will not feel hurt if others come to the same conclusion. Yes, no difference what they think or say, you could go further and say, "I know worse things about myself than you imagine. And since you did not tell all that might reflect upon me I consider myself fortunate and am still your friend."

Oh, my dear brethren I have been preaching now nearly half a century, in many countries and for many religious movements, but the greatest hindrance I have ever found to a genuine revival is not drunkenness, whoredom, or gambling among the ungodly; but the chief thing that keeps God from coming upon a congregation with great power is professed Christians, who are touchy and irritable and out of harmony with each other. God of Heaven, give us a mighty revival once more and let it begin in the pulpit and around the front benches!

Do you remember reading in the history of Methodism that some years after the mighty revival in London and England, the annual conference was held in Fetter Lane Street? It was here that Mr. Wesley wept and pleaded with his brethren to cease their criticism one of another; to cease pulling for the best appointments; to seek a fresh baptism of love for lost men and one another. As a result, they all humbled themselves and confessed their heart wanderings, and once more the revival broke out and sped on as at the beginning. This goes down in the history of Methodism as the "Fetter Lane Confession." Oh, that we might see it repeated in America and all around the world!

Yes, he that overcometh touchiness, peevishness, sensitiveness, stinginess, and a host of other things shall not be "hurt" of the second death. Certainly! If we are saved from being hurt here, it naturally follows that we will surely be saved from the horrors of the second death, hereafter.

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts." It is very easy for every man to declare that his own ways are right, but it is quite another thing for the Lord to ponder the hearts of men, and say, "I find no fault in him."

Again we read, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Do you hear? If your ways please the Lord: your way of transacting business; your way of keeping your word; your way of paying your debts; your way of treating your neighbor; your way of treating an ignorant, stubborn servant; your way of befriending a poor tramp; your way of correcting your children; your way of respecting your parents; yea, when all your ways please the Lord, He will make even your enemies to respect you. And though their carnality may persecute you, yet down in their hearts they will feel condemned as they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear.

Is this too strong? Listen to the great Apostle: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Harken "For he that in these things --" What things?

He who is rightly adjusted to God and men; he who is strictly righteous and peaceable and full of holy joy; he that in these things "serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Your fellow creatures, though wicked and ungodly, down in their hearts and at the bar of their own consciences, will approve of the spirit you show. They may not approve of your loud praying, shouting and plainness of dress, yet they will approve of the gentle spirit you manifest under all circumstances. But, on the other hand, if they can truthfully say that you manifested a bad spirit, it is high time you humbled yourself, apologized and sought a new experience of grace.

I believe it was Fenelon who said, "There is no surer proof that you need a reproof than the fact that you feel hurt when it comes." Oh, to be so well saved that all is well and shrink are gone; so that when you are noticed and appreciated you will not swell out over it. On the other hand, when you are censured and depreciated you will not shrink up over it, but refer all your motives and actions to God who is the chief end of all things.

What are we trying to say? We are trying to say that a good case of saving grace will enable one to show a good spirit though you may not always feel sweet on the inside. Dear brethren, I fear we have made a great mistake in preaching a "second blessing" and while doing so, not making enough of the first blessing. We assume that nearly every one who comes to our altars, seeking holiness, is necessarily a proper candidate. A sad mistake! See, that seeker, adorned like the world; he has no joy and victory in his life; he is harsh and bitter in his spirit at home and toward his enemies; he has little or no relish for secret prayer and reading of the Word; he is a slave to the flesh or some unclean habit; he is out of harmony with his brethren and does not go the "second mile" to bring about a better feeling. All of this means that he needs to regain his lost ground if he ever were on top of everything.

"Till we all conic in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." -- Eph. 4:13

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Chapter 04

THE MANHOOD STATE

THE WHITE STONE EXPERIENCE

"He that hath all car, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." -- Rev. 2:17

Here we have a further unfolding of God's wonderful plan. This is the same convert who, at the beginning, ate of the tree which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Now he is eating hidden manna which is worth much more than outward food. Hidden things are much more valuable and much more expensive than those which are more easily obtained. In California we have great oil wells. When the drillers reach from eight hundred to one thousand feet, they strike gas. As a rule gas pays, but it does not pay so well as oil. So they keep drilling. When they reach another thousand foot level, they strike oil -- sometimes from twenty-five to two hundred barrels per day. But, if they go another thousand feet, they strike a deeper and richer vein, producing from two hundred to one thousand barrels per day. Now the owner is a millionaire. But some men are not satisfied with even this. So they tell the drillers, "Go on!" And, if their huge rope, derrick and tools can stand the strain, they go down another thousand feet. Here is where they strike a "gusher", which sometimes blows the tools out of the hole and shoots a stream of oil six inches in diameter as high as the derrick. Now the owner is a multimillionaire. It pays to go Down! DOWN! DOWN!!!

Oh, that we, in like manner, might do as our Lord has instructed us in Luke's Gospel, "dig deep", and strike the richer and more hidden treasure. As a rule, we do not find coal, iron ore, gold or diamonds on the surface. Shallow and cheap things are found in plain sight, but valuable things are hidden. Not only is this so in the material world, but in the spiritual. People who "dwell deep" are not everlastingly talking and showing themselves in public. It is so sickening at some of our great gatherings to see BIG SELF strut and sit on the prominent seats. Such people have never learned the inward consolation that comes from solitude with Jesus.

Modern society stresses the outward more than the inward. Why should a woman offer for sale all that she has? If she have any charms and depth of soul, why should she expose to a cheap, gaping world her inner beautiful self? Yea, the hidden life and things worthwhile are not on the surface.

How void of depth was that so-called great man who when running for president said in one of his campaign speeches, "I hope the time will come again when we can once more stand with our foot upon the brass rail and blow off the foam" -- meaning, of course, the foam off a mug of beer. How frothy and effervescent such a statement! He evidently knew little about what David meant when he said, "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

There are various interpretations regarding this "white stone" experience. But the best I ever heard was that allusion taken from the ancients. When a man was accused and brought to trial, if he were acquitted, the presiding judge took a large, smooth stone and with one tremendous blow with a stone hammer or iron cleaver broke the stone in two. On the inside of each piece he wrote the man's name and the date of acquittal. One of these was filed away and the other given to the man who was declared innocent. You may know this half stone was very precious to the man, for if accused by his enemies he produced the stone which was evidence of innocence. If they charged him with forgery he would take his half to the seat of his former trial and there find the Other half which conclusively proved his innocence, because no two halves would fit together exactly like these. In like manner it is comforting, when Satan or others accuse us, if we can look inside and then look toward Heaven and have the assurance that we stand justified, yea, sanctified through the merits of Christ.

Again, this white stone experience might be called heart purity. When one receives the grace of pardon he may be so ecstatic that he shouts aloud outwardly. But as a rule when one passes through the deep inward crucifixion to carnality and receives the grace of entire sanctification, it may be so deep and solid that for the time being a shout is out of order. In pardon he receives peace that passeth understanding, while in purity he receives a deeper type of peace -- peace that passeth by misunderstanding.

It is wonderful to be so lost in God that we do not allow outward things, praise or censure, appreciation or depreciation, to affect us. Our text further states that we receive this white stone and in it a new name written which no man knoweth saving he which receiveth it. In other words, when we get the clear, unmistakable witness no one need shout in our ears, "You've got it!" No one need say, "His name is John," and urge us to tell it quick for fear we might lose it. Oh, no! The depth and unmistakable witness to heart purity is not so ethereal that one must jump to his feet quickly for fear it might slip away.

Again, this secret may imply that some things are too sacred to relate. At your home, if you have a servant you are free to talk about common things in his presence. But there are other things that you do not discuss except in the presence of the children. Then there are still other things too sacred to relate except between father and mother. God would have you, dear friend, not serve Him as a servant, for what you can get out of if; nor even serve Him as a child, for what you have in it. But He would have you enter into that mystical union that exists just between the bride and the groom; this is only for bridehood saints. When you are brought into this very close relationship with your loving Lord, He will whisper secrets to you even in the midst of a crowd. too precious to breathe to anyone. I was walking down one of the busy streets in Los Angeles with a preacher friend when all at once God whispered a loving secret to me and I shouted, "Hallelujah!" My friend looked at me and said, "What are you shouting about here on the street?" "Oh," I replied, "my Lover whispered a secret to me!"

Many coarse and sensual minds cannot get much out of the Song of Solomon. They say the expressions there are too suggestive; e. g., when we read, "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." And in the following verses we find the deep mystical union that exists between true lovers; yea, spiritual lovers.

Friend, do you know what I am talking about? Do you know what it is to feed on hidden manna, like that which was hidden by Moses in the ark? There was plenty of manna all over the ground, but it had to be eaten quickly or spoil. Not so with that which was in the ark. "The manna that fell on the ground would last only one day, typifying the transitoriness of the blessings and forms of nourishment in the lower state of grace. But the manna in the golden pot kept sweet for a thousand years, indicating permanent blessedness."
-- Watson

Do you know what it means to get comfort and assurance from the skies, relative to the salvation of your loved ones? I beseech you, do not tell it abroad. Satan and your careless loved ones will take every advantage of it and presume on the mercy of God. Keep that precious secret which cost tears and midnight wrestling -- keep it to yourself and your Lord. And if God reveals to you that a mighty local or national revival is coming, do not spread it abroad. Charles G. Finney said that this was one sure way to kill a revival; namely, report it quickly and loudly.

The Holy Spirit is so tender and sensitive that He can easily be shouted away. Have I not seen it? Have you not seen it at an altar service, or in a devotional meeting where a good meaning, but loud-mouthed soul sang or shouted an octave too high and it frustrated the workings of the Spirit? I beg of you, do not quench the Spirit, but as long as possible pack your blessings down until the proper time and place, when it may be all right to give vent to your inner feelings.

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Chapter 05

THE EXPERIENCE OF POWER

"He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. " -- Rev. 2:26

Here we find a convert, who has now developed into a powerful saint. He is the same one who was formerly a baby on a pillow, in a little crib, but now he has grown until he can be trusted with power. Power is a glorious, yet dangerous thing. Put a child, or even an untrained man at the head of a long passenger train, or in charge of a great ocean liner, and he would wreck and ruin things. But after careful and severe discipline, he comes to the place where it is easy and natural to handle complicated machinery.

We all like to look at powerful things. I like to get out of a train and walk up to the great iron horse pulsating with energy, and say to it: "You certainly are a monster! You pulled fifteen large Pullman cars over the steep grade, and down the other side of the mountain in safety." When I was a boy, I worked in the iron mills where we had a great hammer which could be operated so accurately that it would crack a hazel nut without smashing it. The very next moment enough power could be turned on so it would strike sixty tons! It had a cement foundation thirty feet deep, and jarred the earth for some distance every time it came down.

But we are speaking now of a different kind of power. The disciples looked forward to the time when the ruling power would be taken from the Romans and handed back to the Kingdom of Israel. But Jesus told them that this was not the kind of power He wanted them to have. He said: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." -- Acts 1:8

How sad that we poor mortals put a premium on wrong kinds of power -- for instance, money power. We think it a great thing to make and possess money. If one has enough of it he can very nearly control city councils, state officials, and even Congress itself. One young schoolma'am in London received a prize when she gave the best and shortest definition of "Money". Here it is: "Money is that commodity in life which will purchase everything but happiness, and give a passport to every place but Heaven." Yes, if you have enough money, you can buy yourself out of nearly all kinds of trouble, and buy yourself into nearly every office in the United States!

There is another kind of power -- political power. A man who is a shrewd politician can pull wires and get special privileges that few others enjoy.

Then, there is brute power, or physical force. A man who is a great athlete or pugilist can knock another man "stiff", can draw immense crowds and make a million dollars in an hour. But this is not the power we want.

Again, there is intellectual power. If a man has a great mind, he can sway audiences, write books and become a great factor in the molding of men, but this is simply mind power.

Then, there is a higher grade of power, namely, that of a good name. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches ..." He may be a very poor man, a very feeble man; but yet if he has lived in a community a long time and is recognized as a good citizen, his influence is worth a great deal.

But the ideal power is Divine power -- holy unction. Mr. Finney has a great sermon on "Power from on High." Where he got the idea, I do not know, but I have stood at the Niagara Falls many times and watched with awe that great phenomenon of nature. Here both Canada and the United States have large dynamos where they generate power that runs machinery, lights the cities, and blesses the people -- also sends men into eternity in the electric chair! How do they make it? Lake Erie is one hundred sixty-nine (169) feet higher than Lake Ontario. Were these lakes on a level we could not make power from "on high".

In like manner, if we would have Divine unction and anointing we must humble ourselves and go down, down, down in self-abnegation and humility until the gates of heaven are opened and the mighty power of the Holy Ghost is poured upon us. Mark the language! -- To him "that overcometh will I give power over the nations." Not power over simply one man or a neighborhood, or even a city, but over the "nations"! Is this too strong? Yes, if your faith does not claim it, but "all things are possible to him that believeth!" That is, if you can get on believing ground you are almost omnipotent.

Has not God Almighty said: "Concerning the work of my hands command ye me"? Think of it! God is waiting for a feeble man who will believe him, then stand in the gap and in the name of Jesus demand supernatural things! We get feeble answers because we have feeble faith and a small vision. George Muller said that perhaps there never lived a man who fully proved all the possibilities of prayer. He might have demanded greater things and seen greater victories had he only insisted upon it.

Yes, "according to your faith," or lack of faith, "be it unto you." Perhaps we will not know until the books are opened, to what heights and lengths we might have attained had we not "limited the Holy One of Israel." Who would reject such power? Who would not have it for the asking?

But such power cannot be had in a moment. You remember the young, enthusiastic prophet, Elisha, requested of his master, Elijah, that "he might have a double portion of his spirit." And do you remember the answer? "Thou hast asked a hard thing!" Yes, it meant a hard thing to the flesh, a hard thing to finery, a hard thing to popularity. And, dear friend, if you have ever gotten a sight of your carnal heart and died the death to the "old man" of sin, you know by experience that it was no child's play. When I see preachers and instructors talk and sing seekers of heart purity through in a hurry; then giggle and laugh if they can provoke a smile on that distressed face, I say to myself: "You know little about spiritual crucifixion." We all want resurrection power, but, remember, it must be preceded by crucifixion suffering!

How may we obtain power over the nations? First, by getting power over ourselves. No one is fit to rule over others until he can rule over old self. No one is fit to teach others until he can sit and patiently be taught. Friend, have you ever received a stinging letter? If so, did you have power to hold still and not answer sarcastically? Were you ever crossed or contradicted, and did you have power to hold still and answer never a word? This is the power that the Holiness people need.

John Wesley said there were five things that convinced him that but few in his day had the baptism of the Spirit I would not dare give all of them here but just one. He said. "When you are reproved or contradicted harshly you answer with harshness in a coarse and surly manner. When you are reproved, though mildly, you behave with more distance and reserve toward that individual than you did before. And why? Because your carnal nature pulls off in spirit from perhaps the best friend you have -- one who had the courage to prune you, that you might bring forth more fruit unto God. You have not what I call Christian perfection. If others will call it so, they may. Nevertheless, hold on to all you have and earnestly press forward for what you do not have."

Yes, this power from on high will affect kings and rulers. They may not be aware of it, they may not acknowledge it; but, friend, you can so prevail with God that sooner or later things will come to pass that never would have happened had it not been for your prevailing prayer.

I remember hearing wife tell how that when she and her sister were but fifteen or seventeen years of age, while assorting clothes in the attic in the wicked city of Chicago, all at once they were drawn out in intercessory prayer for President McKinley. They stopped their work and both knelt together and wrestled with God in behalf of this great man, who had never heard of them. The very next day he was assassinated. Perhaps God could not find great preachers to pray at that crucial time, but these two, pure, clean channels could be used by the Holy Ghost to prepare a great President for the sudden change that so soon awaited him!

Let us, then, resort to this mighty arm that moves the world; but remember that purity and power are inseparable. Do not try to seek for power until you are purified, for if God granted it upon an unsanctified heart, you would be ruined. This is why so many great and good men have crippled or killed their usefulness. They had the power of eloquence; they had the power to understand, and unravel prophecies; they had power to lay hands upon the sick and they recovered. Sad to say, as a result they became lifted up and later were ruined by their own gifts! They had power without purity. Again I repeat -- purity first, then holy unction!

MY GREATEST NEED

Master, Thou knowest what I need:
Not fame, nor friends, nor foes to bleed,
Not pelf, [money] nor pleasure, -- and the rest,
But, oh, I need my soul well blest!

Others may pray for great success,
And -- 'tis a proper thing, I guess;
But, Lord, here is my heart-request:
Please daily keep my soul well blest!

Without Thy presence I am poor,
And trivial trials can not endure;
But I can weather every test
If Thou wilt only keep me blest!

Then let the criticisms come;
Let friends deprive me of my home;
And let me be nobody's guest:--
But, Spirit, kindly keep me blest!

-- Everette Shelhamer

THE PROGRESSIVE LIFE

The Seven Overcomeths

By

Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

Chapter 06

THE WHITE RAIMENT EXPERIENCE

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." -- Rev. 3:5

Here we have another step in the mighty development of a saint. This is the same one who at one time was so helpless that he could not clothe himself. Now he is clothed in white raiment, and anointed with the peculiar oil that abideth.

And what kind of raiment must this be? What kind of raiment do you think our fore-parents had before they sinned? After that fearful tragedy "they perceived that they were naked" and now must hurriedly sew fig leaves together to take the place of the heavenly glory that had covered them. Friend, nothing can take the place of this. You can be ever so straight and strict and plain, all of which are commendable, provided you have a corresponding amount of glory. Without this you will simply repel and disgust those who might have been reached.

How often have we seen it! Perhaps the writer himself has been guilty, when he whacked and whaled away at this, that, and the other in his own strength. Yes, something needed to be said, but not in a harsh way. We started in the Spirit but ended in the flesh. It is easy to do this -- sing, pray, preach, and shout long after the glory has lifted. Then we do more harm than good! God pity us!

Scientists tell us that there is an atmosphere around this globe, from forty-five to one hundred miles deep. The Great Creator made it so; and why? No doubt, for various reasons, but especially as a cushion to protect this earth from falling meteors. When one of these comes in the direction of the earth, the moment it enters this cushion of atmosphere, it is dissolved and melts into dust and fragments so that a large city is spared from being buried out of sight.

In like manner, when we are clothed with white raiment and Divine glory, Satan and wicked men can shoot their darts and throw their javelins, but, blessed be God, they are melted before they reach the soul, so that we escape unharmed.

Have you ever seen or experienced what I am trying to say? Have you ever felt weak and helpless in the presence of your enemies? Have you ever trembled and stammered in trying to deliver a message? Have you ever walked down the street not knowing what to do with your hands as your critical neighbors sat on their porches and silently sneered at you? Yes, we have all had this sad experience.

But, hallelujah! At other times, when we were clothed with glory and power, we felt that our enemies looked like so many grasshoppers -- we were able to slay them "hip and thigh!" Nothing could stand before us! We towered in the heavenlies and rode on the wings of the winds. Oh, for more of this indefinable, irresistible, supernatural something upon the ministry and missionaries of today! "Then one of you shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

But this is not all! We are told that the name of this overcomer shall not be "blotted out of the book of life." What? It looks as though, after all, there is something in the doctrine of election. Not as the rank Calvinists believe, that we do not have power of our free moral agency, and must yield because we are "called". No! As long as we are free moral agents, we can yield to sin or resist sin. But we do believe that it is possible to be so well saved that it is hardly likely that we will ever backslide and be lost! We can now think of some saints who are so swallowed up in God, who are so completely dead to the world, the flesh, and the devil, that it would be hard to believe that they would finally deviate and disappoint God or man.

The text further states that Jesus will "confess" our name before His Father and before His angels. O friend, what an honor! We would think it a great honor for the President of the United States or the king of Great Britain to introduce us by name before a great assembly. But, oh, how much greater to have the Lord of Glory become usher, walking up the glittering pavements of the new Jerusalem, and finally introduce to the host of heaven by name one who was once a blasphemer and a profligate; to have Jesus introduce me to the Father and the holy angels, and confess my name because while upon earth I confessed His name. This alone will surpass all earthly honor.

Say, that one confession on the part of my Redeemer will help me to forget all the insults and jeers and sneers I have encountered while upon earth. What will I care then how many dogs and evil men have snapped at my heel's? With one wave of the hand I will forget it all as I stand there before the dazzling white throne, having the Father and the angels smile at me. Yes, it will be worth all that it costs.

THE PROGRESSIVE LIFE

The Seven Overcomeths

By

Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

Chapter 07

THE PILLAR EXPERIENCE

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." -- Rev. 3:12

Here we have a further development in the overcoming life. Keep in mind that this was that helpless child, who has now become a seasoned soldier who can endure hardness. Now he is a "pillar in the temple of my God." Pillars, as a rule, are not so beautiful as pulpits, but they are more essential! Pillars hold things up. Were it not for pillars, great buildings would, collapse. Pillars in large warehouses may be used for various purposes -- not only to hold things together, but they frequently have driven into them great nails and bolts upon which are hung important things.

Oh, is it not wonderful that we can become so fixed and established that we will be dependable? That same man or woman who was once vacillating and easily "hurt" does not pull off and threaten to leave the church now because things do not go to suit him.

I come to your home, and upon ringing the bell a beautiful maiden opens the door and invites me in. Her sister appears, and they both entertain me. Oh, how they can sing and make the piano talk! After some time, a beautiful woman appears in a white apron. She bows, introducing herself, saying: "Supper is now ready." We go out into the dining room and she says, "Father will soon be in -- he is just washing his hands." Presently he appears and begs pardon for being in his overalls. He sits at the head of the table while his wife sits at the other end. The children sit on the sides, and I begin to remark that this is a beautiful and well-cooked meal. I notice the pictures on the walls are hanging just right.

But we could not have enjoyed that music and that repast, had it not been for those two pillars, Father and Mother. His hands may be wrinkled, his finger nails unpainted, furrows appear on his face; but notwithstanding all this, he and his good wife are more essential to the upkeep of that home than are those beautiful maidens.

Likewise, every church may produce those who can sing, shout and make a fair show in the flesh; but sometimes the pastor is pained when he misses them from services. He thinks to himself, "Did they take offense at what I said last Sabbath?" or "Are they staying away because of the way the election of delegates to conference turned out?"

Not so, with a few old pillars! Thank God. If they are not present at the midweek prayer meeting or Sabbath services, the pastor has no uneasiness. He knows they are all right. They are busy serving the Lord! They have started a revival or a prayer meeting in their own neighborhood. They are pillars that "shall go no more out."

Yes, a pillar may be rugged and unpolished, yet he is the one of whom God says, "I will write upon him

my name, and my city." This immediately lends prestige and influence. Oh, my friends, what could be greater than to walk down the streets of this city, the new Jerusalem, with God's own signature all over me? He wrote it Himself -- not His secretary, with a rubber stamp, but He, Himself, wrote upon me His own name and the name of His city, even the new Jerusalem! Oh, this is worth more than paint and polish that can easily be rubbed off! Friend, I would rather be old-fashioned, yea, unlettered, yea, never invited to give an after-dinner speech at a great banquet, yet be worth something when the fight is on and drudgery work needs to be done -- than to look wise and be useless.

"To be a pillar in the temple of God indicates that the soul has penetrated from the outer courts of religious life into the very center of that glorious spiritual structure which the Holy Ghost has been fashioning through the centuries. It is evident that all believers who enter into that glorious structure will not rank as pillars, for it would be out of keeping for every piece in the temple to be a pillar. And we notice that this promise was not given in the earliest stages of the overcoming life, but reserved for the last stage previous to sitting with Christ in His throne. There are thousands of degrees of grace among God's children.

"When it pleases God to take one of His servants and make him a pillar in the temple, Christ then affirms, 'He shall go no more out.' We are to take these words to mean just what they say. We have seen in previous steps that there are points in grace from which the soul may retrograde and be lost forever; but the Scriptures just as clearly teach that there is a point in Divine life where the believer's glorious destiny is forever settled." -- Watson

THE PROGRESSIVE LIFE

The Seven Overcomeths
By
Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

Chapter 08 **THE REIGNING LIFE**

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." -- Rev. 3:21

And now we come to the climax in the overcoming life. This is the same convert who became a pillar, but now he is sitting, which implies rest after toil, and authority after coronation.

The mother of James and John requested for them a seat, one on His right and the other on His left hand -- the highest dignity of which she could conceive. The twelve Apostles are also spoken of as sitting upon twelve thrones. But here Christ offers a yet higher honor; namely, to sit with Him on His throne -- placing us in the closest relationship with Himself and exalting us to His own glory. Think of it! "Once a sinful, but now a glorified man, may share in common with Him who was man and who has so exalted humanity as to render such a condition and such a position possible." All hail the power and glory of Jesus' name!

No doubt, there are a few important chairs at your home, indicating comfort for those who are worthy. There in that cozy corner, beside the stove we find these chairs, one for father and one for mother.

In like manner if we overcome and perform our tasks faithfully, there awaits a golden age when we shall feel pain and toil no more, but sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob under the evergreen trees of life.

Did you ever attend a grand review of old soldiers, younger soldiers and Boy Scouts? It is a grand occasion and for the time being every crippled and wooden-legged soldier forgets his hardships and sufferings as he passes by the grandstand. Here are important seats for dignitaries and officials, but there is one chief seat for the Governor or President. As the great parade is about to begin. I see one vacant seat next to that all-important one. A late comer who is compelled to stand asks impatiently if he may occupy that vacant chair; but he is chagrined and humbled when he is informed that this particular chair is reserved for him who is a little late because of his loyalty in performing duties for his Commander-in-chief. In like manner will it not be worth while to be faithful here and endure all kinds of privations and solitude if a chair -- yea, a throne -- is reserved for you or for me in that grand review of the universe?

"In every single place where reigning with Christ is spoken of there are terms used which indicate something more than justification, terms strongly expressive of being dead to sin, of being purified, made white, and tried." "If we suffer (are crucified) with him, we shall reign with him."

"When the Lord Jesus, as a glorified man and the crowned heir of David, shall sit on His throne as the King of this world, He will institute the great est and most glorious and most diversified empire ever known to human mind. All the kings that have ever existed. in this world in their most perfect state of glory will be in comparison with the theocratic Kingdom of Jesus only as a feeble glowworm to the splendor of a noonday summer sun."

Think of it! Adam Clarke informs us that the last of the seven churches, Laodicea, "was the lowest and

worst of all, yet now is promised the most eminent honor of them all. This shows that the worst of sinners may repent and overcome and finally attain to even the highest state of glory." Praise be unto our adorable Redeemer! But, as every promise has a condition, here we find a key word, though very small. If we would sit with Him in His throne we must overcome even AS He also overcame. And how did He overcome? We have heard many times how He overcame hostility in meekness and forgiveness. When He was buffeted and reviled He answered never a word; when He was spit upon and smitten in the face with the palms of their hands, He answered never a word. When He fell under the cross and bruised His tender knees, "As a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence neither was there any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." Never before nor since has the world seen such a manifestation of meekness. He who could have spoken and the earth would have swallowed up His enemies; He who could have called and presently twelve legions of angels would have fought for Him! Yet in His gentleness "He opened not His mouth." No marvel then that He has a right to a throne. And how cheap would we feel to sit beside such a Being if a single soul could point an accusing finger at us on that great day!

We find this same key word again in that remarkable prayer of our Lord, John 17:14, 16. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." This was said of the disciples before Pentecost, before they received heart purity. They were evidently quite dead to the customs and fashions of the world. Friend, can this be said of you? Does justifying grace work such a change in your heart that you do not talk, walk, dress, vote or do business like the world?

I fear this is why so few get the real baptism with the Holy Ghost. They are not proper candidates. In appearance and behaviour they look and act too much like worldlings. They are not a silent rebuke to compromisers. In fact, they seem to feel at home with jokers and smokers. Oh, that Christ could say once more of His professed followers, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Then, and not till then, will we get back to the slaying power of Pentecost.

He not only overcame hostility, but likewise popularity; we do not hear much about this. Nevertheless He knew what it was to be very popular.

Turn to Mark 1:32 and read: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, "All men seek for thee." In other words, "Master, here is your golden opportunity. Here is an entire city ready to bow down, ready to build you a throne, ready to make this the capital of your kingdom upon earth. Master, Master, what are you doing in this lonely place, early in the morning praying with the dew upon your locks? Why not seize this opportunity that comes only once in a lifetime to be an earthly, yea, universal king?" Such is the reasoning of poor fickle humanity. But listen to His answer! He said unto them, "Let us go into the next town that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth." How unlike the politician; how unlike one who pulls wires and seeks votes to become a bishop! But He knew what was in man, that perhaps in just a few days the same crowd would be ready to shriek out in madness, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Paul must have likewise known something of the meaning of death to human praise and censure. Hear

him: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." Did you hear that? Paul had grown in grace to such an extent and become so much like his lovely Lord that with him it was a "very small thing" that he should be praised or censured. Friend, have you overcome like this -- so that you would not turn your hand over for the difference between the one who comes up and flatters you, and another who comes up and slanders you? What does it all amount to in comparison with the inner consciousness that you aim at only one thing -- not self-interest or self-seeking, but the glory of God.

Oh, to overcome from infancy to old age even as He did. If so, an entrance shall be made for you into that everlasting kingdom that shall have no end.

THE END