

Series 1 Lesson 5

"OVERCOMING"

U N I T Y

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL LESSONS

UNITY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY

LEE'S SUMMIT, MISSOURI

QUESTIONS

1. Why does man ever seek to exercise dominion?
2. Why does evil appear in the world?
3. What is the subconscious phase of mind?
4. Why is it important for the overcomer to understand the functioning of the subconscious phase of mind?
5. What is the Christ consciousness?
6. What is overcoming?
7. What is it that man is to overcome?
8. What is meant by "work out your own salvation"?
9. What is meant by "race consciousness"?
10. How do limited race beliefs become a part of the consciousness of the individual?
11. What is the difference between an overcomer and one who merely does the best he can?
12. What have one's ideals and standards to do with his spiritual growth?
13. Why is it important that an overcomer identify himself only with the highest?
14. What work will the overcomer do for the world? How will he accomplish this work?
15. What changes take place in man's conversation when he becomes an overcomer?

OVERCOMING

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The idea that dominion was given to man in the beginning is so firmly implanted within every human being that each person is continually endeavoring to express it. He tries to surmount conditions and to gain mastery over them. He struggles with sorrow, disease, poverty, death, and all other adverse conditions because he feels, through his memory of past experience, that he ought to be master of conditions and ought to be able to order his life in harmony, health, and success. Spiritual understanding shows that such overcoming is possible, and it points the way.

Past failures of the human family to demonstrate mastery over adverse conditions have come from the ignorance of not knowing how to master them. A right understanding and application of the Jesus Christ teachings is the way out of this ignorance because He exemplifies Truth, so completely that He becomes our Way-Shower. By following His teachings man may "know the truth" (John 8:32), and be set free from all the conditions produced by ignorance. Jesus Christ came into the earth as a human being and demonstrated that He could overcome everything that seems to burden mankind. He revealed to all men that they could overcome as He did. He taught them how to do this and promised to help them along their way of overcoming.

Because man has not realized that there is but one presence and one power in the universe, God the good, omnipotent, and that he is one with that presence and power, he has built up a consciousness of separation from God. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Man fails often to realize that this is just as true of him as it is of Jesus.

From this basic cause--a belief in separation from God, the good, omnipotent--there appears on the surface three reasons why evil appears in the world. But these three reasons have their root in a belief in two powers, "good and evil" (Gen. 2:9).

The first of these reasons is that man has not known that he is a spiritual being. He has not known his innate divinity and that his spiritual identity gives him dominion and authority. Not having the full understanding and realization of spiritual mastery he has in ignorance struggled in the outer to improve conditions in his life and in the world about him. The second reason is that man has not known the power of thought to produce conditions, desirable or undesirable, according to the nature of his thoughts. The outer is impermanent for it is the realm of change. As it is produced by thought, it can be changed by thought. Ignorant thinking, or the ignorant use of ideas, makes all the evil that appears. The third reason is that man through lack of understanding has not seen the relation or connection between cause and effect. No ill effect was ever righted except by correction of the cause, and the cause is always an idea in mind. Ideas are the patterns of the manifest world and must be used in right relation with God's law of right thinking.

Because some persons have experienced effects for which there seems to be no corresponding thoughts, these persons have doubted that the effects originated in mind. They have looked only in the outer realm. There is a phase of mind called the subconscious. Every idea that has ever been thought about in the conscious phase of mind (realm of thinking) sinks into memory and remains, even though no longer held in the conscious phase of mind. Past thoughts gather about some central nucleus or central point (like attracting like) and form states of mind which constitute and build soul-consciousness. The character of these states of mind is determined by the character of the dominant thought.

The formed states of mind make up what is called the subconscious phase of mind and, in a certain sense, they work independently of the conscious phase of mind. Once established by our acceptance and belief, they continue to work according to their character. For instance, in sleep the subconscious carries on breathing, digestion, and circulation. These functions are carried on harmoniously or inharmoniously, according to the past thinking that has become habitual.

Besides being the storehouse of memory, the seat of habits, realm of feelings, the controller of the vital physical functions, the subconscious phase of mind is also the mind of instinctive desire. It is not confined to the brain but is existent in every cell of the body. It is the total of each individual's own thoughts as well as the whole of the inherited race thoughts and beliefs. The subconscious phase of mind works subjectively; it has no power of choice. It reaches conclusions from premises given it, but it is not capable of testing the validity of these conclusions. It never sleeps, never rests, never tires; it is the secondary cause, the reproducing phase of mind in the individual. It is constantly bringing forth according to what has been stored in it, thus building man's body and his environment.

It is clear that the character of the subconscious phase of mind depends upon past and the present thinking. Controlled, constructive thinking in the conscious phase of mind builds right states in the subconscious phase of mind. Uncontrolled, random, and erroneous thinking in the conscious phase of mind builds untrue states in the subconscious phase of mind. Untrue states having been built into the subconscious phase of mind, it has no choice but to act according to these established states. This is the reason why we sometimes spontaneously think, speak, and act adversely.

Paul called the total of all error in man's consciousness "the mind of the flesh,"--Romans 8:7 or "the old man."--Eph. 4:22. By some persons this error thought is called "mortal mind"; others name it error consciousness, personal consciousness, or "carnal mind." The consciousness of Truth established by thinking Truth, is called the Christ consciousness; in the Bible it is named "the new man" (Eph. 4:24).

When rightly understood, all overcoming is seen to be an inner realization of victory over error states of consciousness.

Sometimes, however, one's conscious thought may give him no hint of the overcoming which he needs to do in his subconscious phase of mind. However, when Spirit begins to quicken and transform him, it will reveal the need of a new state of mind.

One may find himself in the midst of inharmonious experiences in body or in affairs. When these experiences come a person may feel that he is a great sinner and begin to condemn himself. But condemnation must be overcome because it makes heavier the burden of sin.

The seeming injustice of including all the race in Adam's sin is cleared away when the laws of mind and the power of thought are understood. "All men are created equal" (The Declaration of Independence). The same law that makes men sinners makes all men righteous in Christ. The use of the law determines the result in man's life. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). Sin, that is, error or negative thinking, is overcome by the attaining of a consciousness of Truth. The whole message of the Gospel is that as the race went down into sin and death in the Adam consciousness of sin, so shall it be lifted in righteousness and life in the Christ consciousness. A cause set into operation always produces a like effect.

The result of overcoming is salvation; freedom from sin and the effects of sinning; freedom from all consciousness of evil, and the removal of evil thoughts from both the conscious and subconscious phases of mind. Every man must work out his own salvation. That is, he must take hold of the saving Truth with his conscious phase of mind, and by the power of his thought build states of consciousness that are enduring, even to the consciousness of eternal life here and now.

The whole of salvation is summed up in the consciousness of the Christ Mind. The perfection of man as the offspring of God is an eternal truth. However, this truth must be embodied in man's consciousness--into his thinking and feeling processes. It is man's conscious individual entrance into the "Christ consciousness" that gives him salvation from his own error thoughts, feelings, beliefs, words, actions, and reactions. Jesus "brought life and immortality to light" (II Timothy 1:10) but man gets the benefit of the light only as he consciously incorporates the light of Truth into his consciousness through the right direction of his daily thought.

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). That is, as in the limited Adam consciousness all men die to the consciousness of good, this results in death of the physical body. In Christ all men shall be made alive to the glorious Truth that man is a spiritual being capable of expressing life abundant through his soul, body, and affairs here and now. Adam represents the consciousness of both good and evil. The Adam consciousness is sometimes called the race thought. The race thought is the thought, concept, or belief that is common to the greater part of humanity, whether it be good or ill. Among the

error thoughts held by the race are those of sin, poverty, disease, death, and the belief these appearances are inevitable in human experience. Another race thought is the belief that materiality is the real. In the blindness of ignorance, man does not see Spirit manifest everywhere. He thinks God to be separate from His creation; he believes that the world and his body are lacking the eternal life and light of Spirit.

These and other adverse thoughts of the race work in the minds of men and produce all kinds of inharmonious conditions. Every one who would overcome must have the understanding of Truth, in order that he may deal with causes intelligently and produce the effects that he desires. If he says, "I don't see what I ever did, that I should suffer," or "My friend is so good, it cannot be that his thinking causes his troubles," he is exhibiting his ignorance of the law of mind action and the power of thought. The negative race thoughts are working in the subconsciousness of all persons who have not fully established themselves in the Christ consciousness. Every overcomer finds that he must deal firmly with these negative race thoughts by putting them out of his mind, and in their place putting thoughts of Truth.

The dominant error race beliefs get into the subconscious of men by being carried from generation to generation, forming what is termed experience, until they are accepted and made a part of everyday beliefs and habits of mind and action. When one is quickened by Spirit and awakens to the knowledge that he is the offspring of God, this realization consciously unifies his thinking with the ideas of Divine Mind and he begins to express and manifest more of God's perfect life.

When man believes only in a physical heritage as his source of life he manifests the limitations and imperfections of that state of consciousness. These limitations are the result of expressing beliefs that have been learned and accepted from human ancestors from whom one believes he has descended. When man learns that he is by nature divine, is in reality Spirit manifested in physical form, his thoughts begin building a new consciousness. He begins to express and manifest spiritual qualities or ideas, which are his inheritance from God.

There are two definite steps that one must take in the process of overcoming:

The first step is for the individual to place himself consciously by faith in the Christ consciousness and hold himself there by training his thoughts to think on God ideas. This step is taken by the conscious phase of mind, the intellect or thinking faculty. One must consciously open his mind to divine ideas and must refuse to recognize anything but good. Thus the change from error consciousness to spiritual consciousness is accomplished in one movement.

The complete transformation, however, comes as the result of a second step taken by the subconscious phase of mind (realm of feeling). The thoughts of good are taken into the storehouse of the subconscious phase of mind and produce states of mind that eventually bear fruit in the outer.

The working of Truth from the inner, the within, to the outer, from consciousness into the body and affairs, is what is meant by working out one's own salvation. It is incorporating divine ideas of life, love, light, substance, intelligence, into one's consciousness and letting these ideas be expressed in his thoughts and feelings, in his words and actions, that he is saved from all false thinking and its effects in his life here and now. This is working out one's own salvation. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Holding oneself mentally in the Christ consciousness by faith consciously connects one with the Truth of Being. Truth quickens the mind and renews it, and the renewed mind transforms the whole man.

It is sometimes taken for granted that if a man does the best he can, no more should be expected of him. However persons all over the world are doing the best they can, yet they are not being saved from sin, sickness, poverty, and death. It is evident that they should do more than they are doing, more than they have thought that they could do. The difference between one who merely does the best he can and a real overcomer is in consciousness. One uses his own mental effort in the trial and error method. The other turns consciously to the Christ within himself and uses the creative power of God to improve his consciousness and eventually his life and affairs. The overcomer lays hold of a divine power through faith which enables him to do what he of himself could not do. This is the power of the indwelling Christ. "I can of myself do nothing" (John 5:30). "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). One's success as an overcomer depends upon the understanding that he has of the Christ principle within. Prayer enables him to get this understanding.

All movements of mind are toward certain standards. Therefore every man's growth is governed by the ideals or standards that he has in his mind. The difference in standards marks the difference between the man who ignorantly does the best he can and the man who makes use of the understanding and knowledge of the Christ, the true standard. The first man has only the thoughts and interests of his human consciousness with which to form his standards. These have no uplifting power and he goes along in a treadmill, making no progress toward spiritual things. The other man has ideals and standards that expand higher and higher, and as he grows in understanding they draw him upward in consciousness. Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32).

Merely to dwell in the contemplation of high and lofty ideals without being able to reduce them to useful demonstrations is nothing more than idealistic thinking. Such thinking alone does not help one to progress toward spiritual realities. The highest aim that any soul can have is to bring God into manifestation through his thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. Each man must let the Christ be exalted in his soul as the supreme good toward which all his being is drawn. Then, through the overcoming, uplifting power of the Christ, good will be manifest in his life.

The children of Israel were a type of the "body" or church of Christ. Their wanderings and all their experiences portray the

experiences of the members of the Christ body in their overcoming. The Israelites were forbidden to mix in any way with the nations about them, lest they adopt heathen standards and forsake the Lord, their God. So the church of Christ is a people holy unto God, separate from the beliefs and standards of the world. This is not self-righteousness, but a requirement of the law of spiritual growth. A mixed state of consciousness cannot produce perfection. Jesus said in His prayer for those who believed in Him, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). Though living in the world, followers of Jesus Christ are separate from it in ideas, standards, and manners of living.

Everyone grows to be like that with which he identifies himself. The overcomer must then be wise in the matter of identification and must consciously unify and identify himself only with Truth ideas. Many persons have a habit of identifying themselves with disease by using such an expression as "my rheumatism," thus claiming and holding fast to the very appearance that they wish to overcome. The question of what one shall or shall not identify himself with is a very important one to the overcomer. He knows a great secret of help and deliverance when he is wise in choosing his thoughts, and attitudes of mind.

Those who drift with the limitations of race thought and follow the popular standards of thinking and living do not qualify as members of the body of Christ nor do they receive the blessings of the overcomer. The overcomers are those who place themselves consciously in the truth of Being and think the thoughts based on the true ideas of God-Mind. These overcomers will make a new world, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). Through the overcomer's understanding and use of Truth, mankind is to be lifted into conscious unity with God.

The world is waiting for the manifestation of these sons of God who have the understanding, the faith, the courage, and the fearlessness to think, express, and manifest ideas that will establish an entirely new order in the earth, even the kingdom of heaven. The leaven is at work in the individual overcomer and it will leaven the whole race. Great is the motive power back of the one who knows that his overcoming is not for his personal comfort and benefit alone, but for the uplift of the human family.

When the overcomer knows the power of thought he can readily understand that thought expressed in spoken or in written words is also powerful, and he will learn to consider carefully the words that he uses. His conversation will no longer center in negative consciousness. He will not speak of conditions that he does not wish to see manifest, but he will speak of life and health. He will not complain, but will praise and bless God, the All-Good for "the abundance of all things" (Deut. 28:47). The Israelites brought great afflictions on themselves by murmuring. By the same law, similar results follow complaints and faultfinding today.

The overcomer does not wait for appearances to testify to the goodness of God, but looks back of appearances to the eternal,

enduring ideas. He knows that God is unchangeable and everlasting good, and so he gives thanks with faith and understanding. If sin seems powerful in his life he overcomes it by acknowledging and giving thanks that he is the sinless offspring of the perfect Father. If the effects of sin appear, he erases their appearance by knowing that sin has been wiped out of his consciousness by the knowledge of Truth, and that its effects can no longer manifest in his life. Thoughts and words are the tools that God has given him to use in the building of his soul consciousness in bringing to manifestation his perfect body, his perfect world and affairs.