

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

How Obtained - How Maintained

STUDIES SETTING FORTH THE BELIEVER'S POSSESSIONS IN CHRIST

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Chapter Two -

MARKS OF A SPIRITUAL CHRISTIAN

As you follow me through the message tonight you will see that the life of the spiritual Christian is in strong contrast to that of the carnal Christian.

It is a Life of Abiding Peace

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

There is still conflict in the life of the spiritual Christian, for growth comes through conquest in conflict. But there is peace through conscious victory in CHRIST. The spiritual Christian does not continue in the practice of known, wilful sin, so he lives in the unclouded sunshine of CHRIST's presence. His communion with the Father is unmarred by the gnawing consciousness of soiled hands, by the pricking of a wounded conscience, or by the condemnation of an accusing heart. So he enjoys abiding peace, deepening joy and satisfying rest in the Lord. Do you have it in your life?

It is a Life of Habitual Victory

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

Note it does not say "victories" but "*the victory.*" The victory of the resurrection is an all-inclusive one. He, who has ever given you a victory over one sin, can give you the victory over all sin. He, who has kept you from sin for a moment, can with equal ease keep you from that same sin for a day or a month. The victory over sin is a gift through CHRIST which is ours as we claim it.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

It would have been very wonderful had He said we were just conquerors. But He declares we are

"more than conquerors." This is victory with a plus sign. This means enough and to spare. This verse tells us we do not have to live on the ragged edge of a victory that we have to strain and struggle to keep.

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place" (II Corinthians 2:14).

Note the word "always." This victory is not restricted to certain times, places and circumstances. GOD says He can cause us always to triumph in CHRIST. I can almost hear some person in this audience say, "It is all right for you to stand there and preach that such victory is possible, but you do not know what a cantankerous person I have in my family with whom I have to live all the time." No, I do not know the circumstances of your life, but GOD does and He put the word "*always*" in that verse. Dare you accept it and believe that GOD can cause you to "**always... triumph in Christ**"?

The words "*habitual victory*" were carefully chosen. By "habitual" I mean that victory is the habit of the Christian's life. This does not mean that the possessor of such victory is not able to sin but he is able not to sin. Continuous sinning will not be the practice of his life.

What is the real, inward meaning of "victory"? Well, it does not mean mere outward control over the expression of sin, but a definite dealing with the inner disposition to sin. Real victory makes a change in the innermost recesses of the spirit that transforms the inner disposition and attitude as well as our outward deed and act.

"Real victory never obliges you to conceal what is inside." Many of us do not call sin sin. Of course, we are obliged to call some glaring offense against GOD or man, that becomes more or less public, sin. But what about that black, defiling thing hidden away in the innermost spirit. Is that sin? GOD says it is.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:6, 10).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1).

Let us face a few simple tests and see if we have been "cleansed from all filthiness of the spirit." You used to lose your temper and give way to violent outburst; now there is a large measure of outward control, but a great residue of inward irritation and secret resentment. Is that real victory?

Some one says something unkind or unjust to you; you do not answer back and outwardly you appear polite, but inwardly you are angry, and say to yourself, "I'd like to give her a piece of my mind!" Is that freedom from sin?

A sixteen-year-old girl came to a meeting once, where we were speaking of complete victory in CHRIST. She lived with a cantankerous aunt who was quite addicted to scolding. The girl often

tried her aunt's patience by being late home from school. When scolded for it, she always answered back. She went from the meeting determined to be victorious, both in returning from school on time and in answering back, and told her aunt so. The skeptical aunt replied that she would believe in the victory when she saw it. A few days later, she was late home again. The aunt tauntingly said, "Ah! this is your victory, is it?" But not a word escaped the girl's lips. You say "What wonderful victory." But listen! A few days later, I received an exultant letter from the girl saying, "Oh! Miss Paxson, now I know the meaning of real victory, for when my aunt scolded me I not only didn't answer back but I didn't want to." This is victory indeed.

Some one has wronged you; you do not openly retaliate or seek revenge, but in your innermost heart you wish the person misfortune and rejoice when it comes. Is that having a right spirit?

At a summer conference in China a woman came seeking help. She was unhappy and others around her were made unhappy. There was unlove in her heart; in fact, there was some one she hated. She was a Christian worker and recognizing the havoc this feeling was working in her own life and in that of others, she tried to gain gradual victories over it. She had hated even the sight of the other person, but she acknowledged finally the sinfulness of that. So she invited the person to dinner in her home, but hoped she wouldn't come! Was that victory? When she came to me she had reached the point where she was "ready to forgive" but "would never forget!" Was that victory? Then she compelled herself to say that she "wouldn't hate" but she "couldn't love."

Was that victory? Not until GOD, who is love, really possessed her heart did she have GOD's kind of victory.

Perhaps some one here is saying, "I have experienced occasionally this glorious freedom from some besetting sin, but it has been only a transient liberty. Is there really such a thing here on earth as habitual victory over all known sin?" GOD says there is.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

On Calvary's cross CHRIST died to set us free from sin. To make that perfect victory permanent He has sent the HOLY SPIRIT to indwell and control. The carnal man is under the power of the law of sin. It operates in his life, bringing him much of the time under its dominion. But there is another and a higher law at work in the believer, and as he yields himself to its mighty power the spiritual man is delivered from the law of sin and death.

Herein lies his habitual victory over all known sin. Do you experience such victory?

It is a Life of Constant Growth into Christlikeness

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18).

There is nothing static in true spiritual experience. The upward look and the unveiled face must

catch and reflect something of the glory of the Lord. With a growing knowledge of Him and a deepening communion with Him there must be a growing likeness to Him.

On one occasion I was travelling upon the Yangtze River in Central China. A heavy rain-storm had just cleared away and the sun had come out brightly from behind the banked-up clouds. I felt an inward impelling to go out upon the deck and the Lord had a precious message awaiting me. The water of the Yangtze River is very muddy. But as I stepped to the railing and looked over, I did not see the dirty, yellow water that day but, instead, the heavenly blue and fleecy white of the heavens above and all so perfectly reflected that I actually could not believe that I was looking down instead of up. Instantly the HOLY SPIRIT flashed II Corinthians 3:18 into my mind and said, "In yourself you are as unattractive as the water of the Yangtze River, but when your whole being is turned Godward and your life lies all open to Him so that His glory shines upon it and into it, then you will be so transformed into His image that others looking at you will see not you but CHRIST in you."

Oh! friends, are you and I reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord?

But there is to be a progression in our likeness to CHRIST - it is to be from glory to glory.

The spiritual nature is ever reaching out after and laying hold of that which is spiritual in order that it may become more spiritual.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 2, 5).

"**Not fruit,**" "**fruit,**" "**more fruit,**" "**much fruit.**" Do these phrases not unveil before us the potentialities for Christ-likeness open to every branch in the Vine? Do they not also show us the positive progression "**from glory to glory**" GOD expects to see in us? These expressions are descriptive. Which one describes you? Only the much fruit glorifies the Father.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

But what is the fruit GOD expects to find on the branch? He tells us.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

The "**fruit of the Spirit**" is the full-orbed symmetrical character of the Lord JESUS CHRIST in which there is no lack and no excess. Note it is not "fruits" as so often misquoted. It is just one cluster, and all nine graces are essential to reveal the beauty of true Christ-likeness. But how often we see a great heart of love spoiled by quickness of temper - there is "**love**" but not "**temperance**" *self-control*. Or we see a person of great long-suffering but he is also very longfaced. There is "**long-suffering**" but no "**joy**." Again one sees a Christian very long on "**faith**" but very short on "**gentleness**."

He has more of the thunder of Sinai than the love of Calvary in his make-up. He defends the doctrine with better success than he adorns it. Sometimes we see one whose life is the embodiment of goodness but the goodness is overshadowed by worry and fretfulness. There is "goodness" but not "peace." Oh! how the lack of the excess of anyone of these graces mars the symmetry of the cluster. In the spiritual Christian all nine graces blend in such winsome attractiveness that the world sees CHRIST living within.

It is a Life of Supernatural Power

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

These words were spoken by CHRIST to a group of unlettered men. One of them was a sunburnt, weather-beaten, rough old fisherman. He would be ill at ease in a modern college crowd and very probably would fail to pass entrance examinations into a present-day theological seminary. But he belonged to the company of believers to whom this promise was given and one day it was marvelously fulfilled in his life when through one sermon he won six times as many souls to true discipleship as JESUS did in the three years of His public ministry.

In what did Peter's power consist, and does it avail for you and me? Was it the power of personal charm? of gracious manner? of giant intellect? of eloquent speech? of massive scholarship? of dominant will? While there were many lovable qualities in the impulsive, eager, loving old fisherman, yet none of them could begin to account for such an overwhelming fulfilment of our Lord's promise in him. GOD clearly reveals the secret of Peter's power.

"But 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).

The power to do "the same works and even greater" is not the power which resides in anything human. On the contrary, it is the power of GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT which is fully at our disposal when we are fully yielded to Him.

Is His supernatural power manifested in your life and works today?

It is a Life of Devoted Separateness

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (I Thessalonians 4:3).

"For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

The spiritual man takes CHRIST as his Example, and determines to walk as He walked. CHRIST lived a life of separateness. He was in the world but not of it. He had the closest contact with the world but without conformity to it or contagion from it. The spiritual man aspires to a similar separateness of walk.

He bears the same relationship to the world as CHRIST bore to it, and the world will have the same attitude toward him that it had toward CHRIST. The Christian will regard the pleasures, pursuits, principles and plans of the world exactly as JESUS CHRIST did. He was not of the world, therefore the world hated and persecuted Him. So will it treat the Christian.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:19-20).

GOD calls you to a life of spiritual "isolation" and "insulation" in order that you may be more fully conformed to the image of His Son. Have you responded to the call to come out and be separate?

It is a Life of Winsome Holiness

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:15-16).

Every Christian is called to a holy life. But many Christians do not want to be holy. They may want to be spiritual but they are afraid to be holy. This may be due to misunderstanding of what holiness is through false teaching on this subject.

What, then, is holiness? Let us first say what it is not. It is not sinless perfection, nor eradication of the sinful nature, nor is it faultlessness. It neither places one beyond the possibility of sinning, nor removes the presence of sin.

Scriptural holiness is not "faultlessness" but it is "blamelessness" in the sight of GOD. We are to be **"preserved blameless"** unto His coming, and we shall be **"[presented]... faultless"** at His coming.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

This truth was unfolded to me with fresh meaning four years ago, when I was called upon to dispose of the personal belongings of a dearly loved sister whom GOD had called Home. Among the things she especially treasured was found a letter written to her when I was seven years of age. She had gone on a visit; I loved her and missed her, and that letter was the love of my heart expressed in words. The letter was by no means "faultless," for the penmanship was poor, the

grammar was incorrect and the spelling was imperfect; but it was "blameless" in the sight of my sister, for it came out of a heart of love and was the best letter I could write. For me, a grown woman, to write the same letter today would not be "blameless," for my experience in penmanship and my knowledge of grammar and of spelling are far greater.

Holiness is, then, a heart of pure love for GOD. It is CHRIST, our Sanctification, enthroned as Life of our life. It is CHRIST, the Holy One, in us, living, speaking, walking.

Such holiness is winsome, for it spells the holy calm of GOD mirrored in the face, the holy quietness of GOD manifested in the voice, the holy graciousness of GOD expressed in the manner, and the holy fragrance of GOD emanating from the whole life. Is such winsome holiness yours?

May we bow in a few moments of silence?

Which is your life - that of a carnal or a spiritual Christian? If you are not living habitually on the highest plane, will you determine now to do so?

~ end of chapter 2 ~
