

## Seven Stages of Overcoming - Part 1 of 7

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The Word tonight is from Revelation chapter 2. What we want to talk about this evening is the first stage of overcoming. We are being molded by God, through all the circumstances, to become overcomers and He gave us seven stages through which we should pass in order to achieve that objective. They are not chronological in our development. That is, they are not one, two, three, four... You don't have to finish number one before number two hits you, but all the different stages might be working at the same time in your life until the work is done.

Revelation 2:1, *Unto the angel (or messenger) of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* One of the first lessons that God taught me in the Word was that He had seven men who were like seven stars shining in the heavens at the same time, and that as one would fail, another one would arise so that the fullness of God's light was in the church at all times. The principle is marvelous and only God could create that. Each person has a part, and no person has the whole. Each person knows the whole but each person only has a part. This part that each man has is to be imparted to a people, and within those that receive that word, from that people will come forth the fullness of overcoming. So then, while this one imparts his part and all the others impart their parts, the Body of Christ will possess the whole. But herein is the uniqueness of the plan: the Body of Christ does not know that it possesses the whole until the parts get together.

So, the fullness of God's Word is in the church and at a certain time God will cause the church to come together and then the revelation of wholeness will come and be manifested in the earth. Now, do we understand that principle? Because we understand that principle, we are going to read about the first part of overcoming, which is probably all that we can deal with tonight.

Now, this angel in verse one says that Christ holds these seven men (stars) in His right hand and that He is also the Christ who walks in the middle candlestick. I would love to hear what the Czech Bible says about that verse. You see, there are some people who preach that there are seven different candlesticks of seven, and that Jesus is the middle candlestick in the seven. But the picture that God gives me is one candlestick with six arms, and that Christ is inside the middle, the seventh candlestick. You will notice that is the only part of the candlestick that stands on the ground. The others are suspended and held up by that middle one. Therefore, it is the will of God that Christ comes forth in one church first, and that is the church in the middle of the candlestick, or that is the candlestick in the middle of the candlestick. Six is the number of man, and if you take away the seventh candlestick, all you have left is man – but it is the middle candlestick that makes it Christ. Amen.

There is one more point that I would like to make clear before we go on further. I was kicked out of a church in Michigan because I preached that these angels were not spirit beings, but they were

human beings. I'm sure that you won't kick me out tonight if you will listen to what I am saying. God could not say to a being that was an angel, "I know thy works; thou hast left thy first love." GOD WAS SPEAKING TO A HUMAN BEING and He called him the angel of the church of Ephesus.

Revelation 2:2, *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:* Now, could we say that this could apply to us? This morning, as our sister brought this book from this American brother who calls himself a prophet, we began to tell her a little bit that he is a false prophet because we know him personally. He has come against the Word that God has given us, so we know that he is a false prophet. He has been in fellowship with brothers who are "great" prophets, and all of them have been proven to be homosexuals and adulterers and everything else. Their doctrine has been proven to be a doctrine of ultimate reconciliation, a doctrine that says that God is going to save everybody and even the devil is going to be saved. I personally don't want to go into any heaven where the devil is, but this is what they preach.

"Because you have tried them," the Bible says, "the reason you are here is because you have found them liars." In this world that we are in, there are many, many apostles. An apostle, a true apostle, is called of God, trained of God, and sent of God. False apostles are men who were originally called of God. Many of them have been partially trained by God. But NONE of them have been sent by God. The Word of God says that salvation cometh by hearing, but you cannot hear God unless you hear the Word of God. So that hearing comes by the Word of God, but the question was asked in the Word of God, "How can they hear except they have a preacher?" (Romans 10:14-17). How could you hear without a preacher? The type of Christian that you are is on account of the type of preacher you heard. The question was then asked, "How could they preach unless they were sent?" Any preacher that you want to prove whether he is of God or not, ask him one question: "Who sent you?" If he can answer who sent him, if he says that God sent him, then you have to find out from him, "How did God send you?" Somebody said he had a dream, but when God sends you, it is not a dream. You KNOW you are sent. However, not everyone who is sent is an apostle, for the word *apostle*, although it means "one who is sent," the one who is sent has to reach a certain degree in God before God sends them as an apostle. So, we understand that it is not every servant who is an apostle – for a servant is also sent.

The word *apostle* in the Word of God has a three fold meaning, and it means "one who is appointed, anointed, and sent." In the Word of God, in the illustration of the tabernacle, there are five bars that hold the tabernacle together. A total of five bars hold the thing together, all of which are symbolic in their meaning and pertain to your body, which is the temple of God. If the tabernacle has its symbolic meaning and your body is the temple of the living God, then every temple (body) has the Word of God written in it in symbol. So in your body, the great servant, are two hands, and the (right) five fingers represent the ministry, or the servant of the body. The other five fingers (left) represent the work of the helpers to each of the other fingers. So, if I am going to lift a weight, and I take one hand, I might have a certain amount of power, but when two hands go, the power is multiplied. If I am going to lift a weight and I leave off using this thumb, which is the apostolic finger, and I shut this (right thumb) off, my hand is hardly any use to do anything. So what this natural illustration means is that every group, every church, every body must have an apostolic guidance as illustrated by the middle bar in the tabernacle. You see, when the middle bar comes in behind you, you all stand in a perfectly straight line. Take out the middle bar and some would be leaning right and some would be leaning left and some would be leaning forward and some would be leaning backwards. But to keep the tabernacle straight, God has a bar that each one is held by in the back and that bar is the apostle.

This top left bar is the prophet. A prophet cannot direct the church. Your life cannot be directed by prophecy. The Lord has set in the church the apostolic ministry to show the direct way to go.

You have here evangelist, you have here shepherd, and you have here teacher. So you have five ministries that must manifest in the Church. Now, the prophetic ministry produces a prophet, but it is not everybody who prophesies that is a prophet, for the whole body prophesies, and it is God's will that the whole body will become prophet, apostle, everything, and these bars be done away with.

These are the boards, and the boards represent the Christians. What ties the church to the apostolic ministry, or to any ministry, are the golden rings. A ring represents marriage. So the Body is married to the ministry by golden rings that hold the bar in its place. But the blessed part about the ministry and the rings and the board is that *none of these ministries* has the power to hold the church. The church has the golden ring - in other words, the gold is on the board and the golden rings hold the bar and the bar holds the boards.

Now, if you can understand the principle that God has put there, when He was sending me out, He said, "Never own a church." You hear some ministers say, "My Church." "Never own a church," but the church owns the ministry. In other words, as I stand before you here, maybe I represent the most prolific church builder you have ever seen. We used to build something like four churches every month, both of us. We would travel from place to place. I was telling them today how we went into a place - sometimes it doesn't take more than two messages to build a church. God would bring people crawling on their knees; a whole congregation would be saved in one night. BUT WE NEVER OWNED ONE. Now, when God says *apostle*, He is talking about someone who He trained, sent, and continues to be with in a ministry to lift up the church. The apostle cannot own the church. He cannot get rich off of the church. He cannot take up the offering. He cannot do anything but give the Word of God if he is a true apostle.

God is saying that in order to be an overcomer, you have to know who and what is the apostolic ministry that you are following. Sometimes you only discern this through maybe reading a book. That is why it is so dangerous to read books that mix the gospel that you are receiving. Most of the books you have been reading, you can ask me about them, for very often I know the people very personally.

One day, I was going on with a certain brother - some of you have his books. I was taking him to Bloomington, Illinois, which is next to where the church is now. We had a very large gathering of the church there in Illinois. He was the one that was going to bring the word to us that evening. We were on our way to the meeting and he was driving the car, I believe, and I was sitting beside him. Suddenly, it hit me. I said to him, "How could a man preach a thing like this?" I did not know that I was talking to him. I thought that I was talking to him about somebody else that was preaching this wretched doctrine. He was very quiet as I explained the Word of God and how could he do this and why he couldn't do that and the good and the bad of what he was preaching. The brother went with me to the meeting and he gave a beautiful word, and it blessed all the people. Then, one day, he wrote an article in one of his papers and he told of the incident of riding with me and how God corrected him and changed him from preaching ultimate reconciliation, for that was what he was going to preach.

After he did that, he got together with some of his fellow reconciliationists, and he repented of his repentance. He said that I convinced him against his will. So, some of the books that he is sending out to you people are still ultimate reconciliation. **GOD ONLY HAS ONE DOCTRINE!** There is no way that you could say either, "Well, it could be this," or, "It could be that"! God's ***word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*** (Psalms 119:105). God sends light so that ALL

men might be enlightened. The sun in the morning shines from an angle way down low. The angle and the strength of the light changes as the day progresses, but it STILL is the light of God. Now therefore, know the apostle. It is the God in you that will discern the God in those whom God has sent. Hallelujah! Your soul becomes satisfied by the energy of the life of God, which comes from the Son of God. Don't settle for less. Amen. If you don't get the right type of food, you will not have the right type of energy.

He says to the church in Revelation, therefore, "You have found them liars." Through all the mass of information that is coming from the spiritual world, you have sifted out and found the right food to eat. You have rejected the poison, and you have brought the pure Word that gives you Life. YOU HAVE DONE WELL! Amen.

Revelation 2:3, *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* Have you borne? Have you had patience? Have you suffered for the Word of God that you have? I remember in Ravno, how ALL the preachers that were Brother Sergei's friends turned against him when he began to believe the Word that God sent to Ravno. For God didn't send the Word to Ravno for him alone, but so that the whole area would be lighted by the light of God. But they turned against him for no reason at all.

I remember one night we went to a church in that city, and after the service, the minister said that he actually rejected the Word because I hit the table. They were sitting down dead, as if they were not hearing anything at all, so I slammed the table to see if I could get them awake. He said the next night when they came for us to preach, "Brother Mark, you come. Don't slam the table. Don't speak in tongues. Don't shout. And we don't want **this** man to be in our church at all." I stayed home, and Mark went.

It means that God is putting in the church the Spirit to discern God in the preachers. "But you have had patience," for many have attacked you as being stupid young people. Amen. Thank God for stupid young people who LOVE God, and will walk in truth and righteousness. There is a reason why God has planted the church in the Czech Republic, in Bratislava, in this whole area. This is supposed to be the only hope that Europe will have because God wants you to stand. The hour is coming when everything will go against you. So you need to feed now and put your roots down to God so that when the storms come, they will not move you. You have *borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* Blessed be God Almighty.

But you have not yet overcome. (chuckle) You have done works, but there is something about works, that unless works produce LIFE IN YOU, they are all in vain. Let's go over that a little bit. "I have done great works for God. I have done mighty things for God, but," Paul said, "I have to be careful lest I become a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27). Since 1947 or 1948 (you have heard about those days), I have been working in the vineyard of God, and I have had the pleasure, and sometimes the displeasure of meeting most of the mighty men of God. How would you like to meet a man who was present when another man's hand was chopped off? He picked up the hand and saying, "in the name of Jesus," pushed the hand back! And both of the man's hands are perfect. If you saw a man do that, tell me how you would feel about that man. "Oohh, he is a man of God!" "A mighty man of God!" Well?

What about if you saw a man mad, totally demented, wild? It took ten men to hold him, to tie him, to restrain him. They brought him in a closed van like a prison and this same man who put the hand on, says, "Open the van. Put me in." They didn't want to do it! They said, "No, brother. Don't do that, brother. You will be torn to pieces. Ten men had to restrain him." But he said, "Open the van, I say." They opened the van and pushed him in and locked it. They didn't hear anything. Presently there was a TAP-TAP-TAP on the door. They opened the van. The two men came out hand

in hand, and he was clothed and in his right mind. Wouldn't you say that was a mighty man of God? He was, but guess what? He was doing mighty works because he believed God - *but it never changed him inside*. The same man left the mighty works and hit the bottle, and became an alcoholic while he was doing the mighty works. He died an alcoholic one night after doing some mighty works.

Revelation 2:2, *I know thy works,... Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love*. He had left his first love and God never left him. He had left his first love, but God did not leave him. In other words, God had tested him, God had tried him, God had carried him through the areas of suffering, and God was making a man - but he refused to be made. Do you know what he did? He built a great place; he called it "Miracle Valley." The sick went there and were healed. Those who were suffering went there and were blessed. He became mighty in works and poor in godliness, so that the love that he had for God was turned away for love of the works. Watch it, brethren! You are in the same road! God is saying to you that your works are good, but that your spiritual quality, or maturity is what God wants. All the works, all that you could do for God means nothing if that work doesn't do something to your humanity. It is the will of God that you should be like Jesus Christ. It is the will of God that you should, one day, be able to put aside the humanity that you are, and become like Christ. Now, I'll tell you something. When God called you, you were not perfect. Tonight you are not perfect. But God is working on you, and if you will allow the Spirit of God to do what He is doing to you... He is killing your father in you, He is killing your mother in you, He is killing your nation in you! In other words, I cannot go and boast, "Ah, I am a black man! I am strong. I am this. I am that. I am the other." I AM NOTHING as far as God is concerned! He wants to make Christ out of you.

A brother was working with me, both of us were working on the things of the Lord, and he got impatient on God one night. He said, "God, You said to me that anything I asked for I would receive. God, I am asking tonight for perfection! Give it to me according to the Word of God. You must give me what I ask for!" God said, "Yes! Yes, you can have it. You can have perfection." He said, "There is only one little problem. You will have to get rid of the imperfection that is in you." You know, it takes God to give an answer like that. "It is yours - *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5:48). Didn't He tell you to do it? Why don't you? Too much of your nationality is in you. Too much of your father is in you. Too much of your mother is in you. You have to begin to reject the humanity of you! Hallelujah! Oh, yes! And that is why God calls us to look at Jesus. We sang a song, the last song,

Lord, You are beautiful.

Lord, You are wonderful.

Lord, you are more than my heart can think of.

When you begin to see Jesus, you will begin to see yourself and as Jesus is exalted in you, you become smaller. So, Sister Maja, the brother that you were talking about there, he comes into the meeting like this, with his chest puffed out, saying, "I AM A PROPHET OF THE LORD!" I couldn't help but laugh. NO prophet of God does that. Amen. We are small - prophet, apostle, *...we are of all men most miserable* (I Corinthians 15:19). You are small and wretched when you stand before God. Hallelujah! "Make me a hired servant, oh God. That is all that I want to be." Praise be to God.

*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love*. How do you leave your first love? You say, "Oh, but God, I love You." "Yes, you love Me second-class. I gave you something and you love the thing more than you love Me."

One day, the Spirit of God came to me and said, "Give Me back that gift of healing that I gave you." Do you know why? One day, I was chopping wood to burn and the Spirit of the Lord

came to me and said, "Go and pray for Brother Wilson NOW!" I said, "Yes, Lord, let me just finish chopping this piece of wood." I went down with the ax and the wood came up and slapped me in my forehead. \*\*I SAW STARS!\*\* Man, I jumped out of that hole and ran. It was a small town and I was running up the street and the whole town started running after me to see what was happening. They knew that if I was running up the street that something was happening. I looked behind me and saw these people running after me. I ran through a short-cut to go to Brother Wilson's house. Brother Wilson was smitten by the spirit of madness. His eyes were bulging out of his head. I ran through the crowd that was in the yard and ran into his room, and saw this man staring at me bug-eyed. I put my hands on him and said, "In the name of Jesus!" He just made a great big sigh, like a man who had just come from a far journey, and he said, "Brother duCille, thank you." Hallelujah!

It went on like that. Time after time I would go into a church and I would get up to give a Word and the whole church would fall to the ground and I was talking to the backs of their heads. Everybody was flat down. I was in my house one day and I saw a woman running down the street. She was mad, and they had no cure for her. It was raining and I said to the Lord, "My God, deliver that child." I said, "If You will deliver her, bring her right here into the room." Believe you me, I had a barbed wire fence around the yard. The woman came over the barbed wire fence, because she didn't come back by the road. Suddenly, I heard a knock on my door. I opened the door and the mad woman jumped in before me, dripping with water. I said, "Praise God. You have come." She nodded yes. I said, "Kneel." The first thing you do with a spirit is to take charge. Don't let the spirit manifest before you. "In the name of Jesus, kneel!" She went down on her knees. When she obeyed the Word of God, I knew that she was healed. I laid hands on her and she just thanked me and went home.

So, I became a legend in the little district there. I would be coming along the street and there would be a laboring man coming towards me and He would stop by the way and take off his hat. I was starting to feel that something was going wrong. They were giving me the honor that God should get! It was not good. I had no chance to do anything about it, so God came to me and said, "Give Me back the gift of healing!"

One of the most powerful men that has ever been in the church was a man called William Branham. He was a very humble man and loved God. He wasn't educated, but he did more miracles than anybody else you can think of. He went to Africa and he preached that they were sons of God, and some tribesmen came in and captured him. They took him to their village and they said, "If you are a son of God, we are going to find out today. The son of the chief is dead, and if you are the son of God, you will bring him back to life. If you are deceiving us that you are a son of God, we will kill you." That was a tall order for a preacher, right? So he went in and he prayed, and he laid himself down upon the boy, and the boy sneezed. He came to life. That is the man I am talking about. There are many, many more stories of the power of God working in his life.

One day, he was standing up with Brother Clayt Sonmore. They were standing in a room talking, a knock came on the door, and two men were there to see him. They said, "We have a word from the Lord." He said, "What is it?" The men dropped on their knees and grabbed him by the feet and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He was so torn up. He threw himself down on the ground and said, "God, kill me." He said, "God, kill me, because the very thing that I hate, that is what has happened to me. The people are now worshipping me instead of God." Well, eventually

God killed him. Yes, eventually God killed him. He got into a car accident, a freak accident. A drunken man just drove right into him. There was no way to get away. In his dying moment, they told him that his wife was in bad shape, also. His son took up his hand and put it on the wife, and he said, "In the name of Jesus," and the wife was healed, but William Branham died.

I mean, I am telling you all of these stories to tell you that works will not save you. Works will not make you like Jesus Christ. Those who are like Jesus will do the works that Jesus does, but if you leave your first love and begin to love works or love miracles, you are a LOSER. Now, Jesus is saying to those who have lost their first love - because, you know, you can lose your first love and be sitting here praising God! I wonder if you can understand what I am driving at? Your heart and mind is turning to something else rather than to the perfection of the being that God has made you to be. God made somebody an elder, a preacher, but you are so fascinated by the fact of being a preacher that you forget God. Preaching becomes number one and God becomes number two. Sometimes God gives you a wife and she becomes number one and Jesus becomes number two. Sometimes Jesus even falls out to number three; the children and everything else become number one and number two. God is saying you are faced with the same thing that everybody is faced with: the Branham, the this, the that; you are faced with the same situations.

IS JESUS CHRIST NUMBER ONE IN YOUR LIFE? Answer you - not me. Answer yourselves. Is Jesus Christ number one in your life? As a matter of fact, maybe you should repent here tonight. Maybe we should have a repentance service. Is Jesus Christ number one in your life? Now, God says, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Amen. *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* You don't believe in pastors - Nicolaitans - people who rule over the people of God. Or do you believe in it? Do you believe in being a director in the work of God? "You do this," "You do that," "You go over there," "You do the other." NICOLAITANS! God says it is a good thing that you don't like Nicolaitans. *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.*

If you can overcome the self that is in you, if you can overcome the desire to be great, if you can overcome the problems of keeping your first love, if you can do this, saith God, THEN, (hallelujah!) you are an overcomer! He said here, *He that hath an ear, let him hear...will I give...the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* What is He talking about? Jesus Christ! He said, "I will give you the indwelling of Christ within you. ...*Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27). I will give you the Christ within you, the pulsation of life of God within you if you can overcome this." The spirit to fail is always present. The temptation to turn to something else besides Jesus is always present. This is your first love, and God is saying to you, "Remember how you were when you were first saved." Remember the days when you loved God more than anything else. Remember the time when you wanted God more than you wanted the very breath of life. If you turn back to your first love, then you have accomplished the first stage of overcoming.

God bless you, brethren!