

A BATTLE ALREADY WON

By Ian Thomas

In Exodus 4, we see that after God commissioned, Moses to be the means in His hands of bringing His people out of Egypt, Moses answered and said,

Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand (verses 1-4).

This was the sign that God gave to Moses of a victory already won, a victory that God gives to those who trust Him. As he fled before the serpent, God said in so many words, "Don't run away from it! Turn round! Face it! Put out your hand and take it by the tail!"—and the moment Moses put out his hand and took it, the serpent became as helpless and harmless as a rod.

What is the serpent in your life before which you have been fleeing? As a Christian, what is it that has been chasing you? Of what are you afraid? God says, "Stop running away—there is victory for you too! Turn around, put out your hand, and take the victory that I will give you!"

There are countless Christians fighting a battle that is already lost, trying in their own strength to overcome the subtleties of sin. That is a battle you can fight all your days, but I tell you now, you cannot win! It is a battle already lost, lost in the first Adam, who was made a living soul, and died; but the last Adam, Jesus Christ, has already defeated sin and death and hell, and Satan himself. Why not accept in Him the victory that He has already won? Victory over the flesh is not to be attained—it is to be received.

"Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). No matter what it is that threatens you, if you walk in the Spirit, you can turn around and face your enemy. You can "take him by the tail" and find him helpless and harmless in your hands, for God has already bruised the serpent's head! (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14). In other words, to walk in the Spirit is to assume by faith the victory with which He credits you, and God will vindicate our assumption, and make it real in your experience.

Now the devil loves to invert truth and turn it into a lie, and probably what he has been saying to you is this: "Try not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and then you will walk in the Spirit," as though the latter were a reward for the former. He knows that in this way, he will keep you preoccupied with yourself, instead of being preoccupied with Christ.

There is nothing quite so nauseating or pathetic as the flesh trying to be holy! The flesh has a perverted bent for righteousness—but such righteousness as it may achieve is always self-righteousness; and self-righteousness is always self-conscious righteousness; and self-conscious righteousness is always full of self-praise. This produces the extrovert, who must always be noted, recognized, consulted, and applauded. On the other hand, when the flesh in pursuit of self-righteousness fails, instead of being filled with self-praise, it is filled with self-pity, and this produces the introvert. A professional "case" for professional counselors!

The devil does not mind whether you are an extrovert or an introvert, whether you succeed or whether you fail in the energy of the flesh, whether you are filled with self-pity or self-praise, for he knows that in both cases you will be preoccupied with yourself, and not with Christ. You will be—self-centered—and not—God-centered!

So Satan will seek to persuade you that "walking in the Spirit" is simply the consequence of your pious endeavor not to fulfill the "lusts of the flesh," of which he himself is the author, and thus by subtly confusing the means for the end, he will rob you of what he knows to be your only possibility of victory.

Is that not what you have been trying to do? You have been trying not to fulfill the lust of the flesh, in order to walk in the Spirit—fighting a battle already lost. What God has said to you is this, "Walk in the Spirit, in a attitude of total dependence upon Him, exposing everything to Him, "and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh"—for you will then be enjoying through Him the victory that Christ has already won. To walk in the Spirit is not a reward—it is the means! It is to enjoy the Saving Life of Christ!