

Responding to God in Faithful Living

Cross-view Series (2013)
Text: Revelation 12:7-12
March 24, 2013 (3 of 4)

The Triumph of the Slaughtered Lamb

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

Introduction

1. This probably seems like an odd text choice, especially on Palm Sunday. I have chosen it as a follow-up from last week's consideration of Jesus' death on the cross and the irony of it all. In a way, I am continuing the irony theme as we consider the **triumph** of the **slaughtered Lamb**.
2. Throughout the ages, from the Garden of Eden to the second coming of Christ, there has been and will continue to be a battle going on between the devil and humanity, particularly the people of God. Regardless of your prophetic bias, it is clear in the first six verses of Revelation 12 that the devil was trying to destroy the Lord Jesus. Satan tried before Jesus was born to corrupt or destroy the royal blood line, and he tried when Jesus was born and he tried throughout Jesus' earthly life, but he failed. For Jesus completed His mission and **“was caught up to God and to His throne”** (v. 5). So Satan went after God's people. Some see this as Israel, others the church or perhaps both. But the point is that something dramatically happened after Jesus' death and resurrection. And as a result of the death of Christ, the power of the people of God to overcome the devil was made available.
3. I should say something about cause – first cause and secondary cause(s). There are many causes for why things happen. It could be our own making. It could be Satanic. It could be for all intents and purposes an accident, a happenstance. But the first cause in everything that happens is God. He ultimately controls all things. I think most

of us believe that though we might have a difficult time explaining it or defending it. I am confident that it is true. It is that divine perspective that the Apostle John takes here in this text to put all of the challenges and problems faced by God's people throughout the ages in perspective. But also true in the secondary cause aspect of whatever happens is the rage of Satan against God's people. He wants to destroy whatever belongs to God. He wants to destroy God's people. He works tirelessly to do so. He has been permitted to stir up raging anger against God's people, often igniting the hatred of unbelievers and using them against the people of God.

4. The triumph of the Lamb is understood here, but the question remains, what about God's people who are making an effort to live Godly lives in a Satan dominated world? What about them? What about us? Do we have any defense against the enemy? Do we have any hope of victory? Are we able to overcome this powerful foe? There are some good advances by the church of Jesus Christ. There are some wonderful victories. But along side the victories are the carnage of defeat and foolishness and evil all around. Again I ask the question, "Are we able to overcome this powerful foe?"
5. The answer comes in verses 10-11. The answer is "Yes! Absolutely yes!" Verse ten sets the stage and verse 11 articulates the application. Listen again to verse 10 - ***And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*** The framework of victory is established in the triumph of Christ on the cross over sin and Satan, over death and hell. Paul said it this way in Colossians 2, ¹³ ***And you, who were dead in your trespasses...God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.***
6. Christ's victory is our victory. Satan has been defeated. But there remain some battles yet to be fought against this defeated foe. His anger remains and intensifies as the time draws short. How do we walk in this victory? How do we overcome?

I. OVERCOMING BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB (11a)

- A. Satan is the accuser but his accusations are without teeth

1. Our enemy is the grand accuser. He accuses us by trying to make us feel dirty and guilty and weak and defeated. But he also brings his accusations about us to God.
 2. What could my answer be to Satan in regard to his accusations about me to God: "I'm not really that bad"? That won't work, because what Satan says about me to God is true! In fact, we could say, "Satan, you don't know the half of it! It is worse than you have made it out to be! But God has accepted me and declared me righteous **because of the blood of the Lamb!**"
 3. That was Paul's argument in Romans 8 - ³³ **Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.** ³⁴ **Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.** Satan is the accuser, but his accusations have no teeth because of the blood of the Lamb!
- B. Satan is rendered powerless on the ground of the blood of the Lamb
1. Carson writes, ***"Do you find yourself accepted before this holy God? If so, it is because of the blood of the Lamb. Have you received the blessed Holy Spirit? He has been poured out because of the blood of the Lamb. Do you have the prospect of consummated eternal life in glory? It was secured by the blood of the Lamb. Are you in the fellowship of saints, brothers and sisters who love Christ, the church of the living God, a new body, the body of Christ on earth? This is bought, secured, and constituted by the blood of the Lamb. Are you grateful for the spiritual armaments that Paul tells us to deploy (Ephesians 6)? The entire arsenal is at our disposal because of the blood of the Lamb. May we go to God in prayer? It is because of the blood of the Lamb. Do we find our wills strengthened by the Spirit? That incalculable benefit was secured by the blood of the Lamb. Every whiff of victory over the principalities and powers of this dark age has been secured by the blood of the Lamb"*** (Scandalous, p. 99). Amen!
 2. Overcoming the enemy has nothing to do with the kind of day we are having or the amount of work we are doing or the kind of prayers we pray. It has everything to do with the blood of the Lamb. Nothing more and nothing less! That is how we win. If we drift from the cross we are heading toward defeat. Our victory is found in the blood of the Lamb. We overcome our consciences, our bad tempers, our defeats, our lusts, our fears and our pettiness by the blood of the Lamb! **"We dare to**

approach a holy God praying in Jesus' name, appealing to the blood of the Lamb"
(Carson, p. 103).

3. The enemy will not let up. He continues to "go about like a roaring lion...", but we are safe because of the blood of the Lamb. But what about others, those who have not been bought with that price, who are not in Christ, who have not been cleansed by the blood and covered in the righteousness of Christ? What about them? What is their hope to overcome?

II. OVERCOMING BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY (11b)

A. The only hope for a Satan dominated world is the Gospel

1. Policies, programs, political maneuvering, none of that will ultimately be of any value in regard to overcoming the enemy. It comes only through the blood of the Lamb. And that blood of the Lamb is the Gospel.
2. Victory over the evil one comes when the Lamb rescues us, when He delivers us from the kingdom of darkness and brings us into the His Kingdom! It is in Christ that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin!
3. Colossians 1:21-23 remind us, "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh **by his death**, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting **from the hope of the gospel that you heard...** But how did we hear?"

B. The chosen method of disseminating this Gospel in through our testimony

1. Paul finishes the thought in verse 23, **which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.** How does that happen? It happens through "our testimony!"
2. When we think of testimony, at least some of us old-timers, we think of Sunday night church listening to someone drone on and on about various experiences they have had as a believer in Christ – kind of like an early version of Facebook! (Sorry). (And not all testimonies were inappropriate or uninteresting). But what John refers to here is the testimony of the Gospel.
3. The wheat and the tares are going to grow side by side throughout the ages. Paul reminded Timothy, **Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse,**

deceiving and being deceived. So how do we overcome? How do we see progress in righteousness in this unrighteous world? We overcome by the word of our testimony. And our testimony is about the blood of the Lamb! It is by the “foolishness of preaching” the Gospel that God chooses to open the hearts of people to repent and believe and be saved! Do you understand? But that means that we must go into a hostile world to proclaim a message they do not want to hear because the enemy had stirred up hatred in their hearts toward God and the Gospel. Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress” is dead on: “The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him!” And that word is the Gospel, the word of our testimony of the saving power of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world to purchase a people for God! And if we are to make any advances, gain any ground in enemy territory we will have to do it without fear of the cost. In other words, God’s people are to be...

III. OVERCOMING BY THEIR FEARLESS LIFE IN THE FACE OF DEATH (11c-12)

A. The way it often is

1. Christians used to write books on how to die well, on how to use the last ounce of energy to be victorious in Christ, to stand in Him against the “wiles of the devil.”
2. Now Christians write books like, “Your Best Life Now” and “The Keys to Personal Prosperity” and so forth. We believe the Gospel. We are convinced that we are saved by the blood of the Lamb. We know that this is the Gospel and it must be communicated. But we are interested in peace, in comfort, in safety, in luxury, in leisure. We want to be happy and full and healthy and secure. We will speak for Christ if it comes up in the conversation, but we are not interested in taking the initiative and certainly not interested in going out of our way, especially into enemy territory to speak of Him!
3. I don’t see that in the Scripture. I certainly don’t see that in this passage. We overcome the enemy in the proclamation of the Gospel when we fearlessly communicate the message of the Gospel in the face of death! That was the consistent testimony of the Apostle Paul. ***But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but***

not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

- B. The way it must be (and in some places around the world is)
1. According to statistics, over the last 10 years, each year 160,000 Christians have been martyred. In Sudan alone over the past 15 years, two million have died for their faith.
 2. I am not praying for that for us nor am I advocating the necessity of martyrdom. I am, however, saying that we ought to be willing to die for the sake of Christ, and at the very least that means that we must die to self. That was Jesus' point in taking us the cross and following Him.
 3. You know Hebrews 11:35-38 - ***Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*** Why did they do that? They did that because ***they loved not their lives even unto death.***
 4. They did not want to die, but they wanted to live for Jesus more than they cared for this life. "To live is Christ; to die is gain."

Conclusion

1. "And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed His truth to triumph through us!" We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, through the testimony of the Gospel, proclaiming God's truth without fear of what the enemy can do to us.
2. That is the application of the cross of Christ, of our salvation in Christ, of the call of Christ to us as His disciples.
3. D. A. Carson, who not only is a theologian, but also a writer of hymns concluded one of his hymns this way:

But we have overcome him by the blood of God's own Lamb.

***We silence accusations; on Christ's death we take our stand.
The Kingdom is advancing by the Gospel we proclaim.
The truth to which we testify that frees from fear and shame.
We will not hide from danger, death and other earthly loss,
For we are learning daily death, the pathway of the cross.
The devil fights with fury, with a cruel and bruising rod.
But we extol the triumph of the Kingdom of our God.***