

Pastor Don Nelson

Reflection: July 15, 2012
Beverly E.C.C, Chicago, IL

“THEY OVERCAME”
Revelation 12:10-11

■ Revelation 12:10, part A: **“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.”**

What is salvation, if it is not God’s liberation of sinful, broken people like us? {1 Co 1:18-26} **“Christ crucified”** is **“a stumbling block”** to all who **“demand miraculous signs”** **“and foolishness to”** those who **“look for wisdom,”** **“but to us who are being saved”** it is **“the power of God”** unto salvation!

What is power, if it is not God’s astounding work to conform us {Ro 8:28-29} **“to the likeness of his Son, that [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers”** and sisters? And so **“we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”**

What is the kingdom, if it is not the place of {Lk 4:18-19} **“good news [for] the poor...freedom for the prisoners ...recovery of sight for the blind... release [for] the oppressed,”** and the outpouring of God’s favor? The kingdom hasn’t yet come in its fullness; but it is being manifested among us here and now.

■ Revelation 12:10, part b: **“For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”**

{Jn 8:44; 10:10} **“The devil was a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar and the father of lies”** who **“comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”**

In times of sickness and pain Satan attempts to snatch away our joy and rob us of hope. He wields his weapons of exaggeration, half-truths, and lies to darken our eyes with gloom, cloud our minds with doubt, and burden our souls with bitterness and fear.

But Satan is not all-powerful. Not only have the angels **“hurled [him] down”** from heaven, God’s people have defeated him.

■ Revelation 12:11: **“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”**

Christ Followers overcame Satan in the past, they are overcoming him in the present, and they will overcome him in the future.

We overcome Satan, first, **“by the blood of the Lamb.”** Jesus is {Jn 1:29} **“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** {Is 53:4-5} **“He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... was pierced for our transgressions, was crushed for our iniquities...”**

When the Lamb identified with us, his body was broken and his blood was shed to overcome our sin. Then he rose and overcame death and the devil. {Ro 6:5} **“If we are united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him his resurrection.”** We are no longer slaves to sin and Satan.

We overcome Satan, second, “**by the word of [our] testimony.**”

Christian “**testimony**” is far more than the account of how the Messiah saved us. It starts with the OT witness of God’s miracles, the covenants, the Law, and the prophets. It expands to include the Gospel record of the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It incorporates the teachings of the Acts and Epistles, how the Spirit birthed and guided the Church. It grows to integrate the spoken story of God’s work in our lives. Last, but not least, it includes our words and deeds that glorify God and manifest his kingdom. “**The word of [our] testimony**” destroys the work of Satan in our lives.

We overcome Satan, 3rd, by obedience unto death.

The call of Jesus remains unchanged: {Mt 16:24-25, NRSV} “**If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.**” We are not compelled to choose between physical survival and spiritual faithfulness. But when Satan tempts us to wallow in self-pity, to be consumed by anger, to give up on God, we can win by giving our weakness and strength, pain and comfort, hopes and fears to God. It is then that we find life.

In his love, wisdom, and power the Living God might not heal our bodies. If so, {Ro 8:37-39} “**in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.**”

Yet he can, and often does, heal our bodies. He might act instantly or gradually. He might perform a miracle, or he might work through human healers. Either way, the glory is his.

And it isn’t only bodies that need healing. Fear, despair, bitterness, a critical spirit, hatred, and pride destroy lives. It is not necessary to be imprisoned and diminished by these oppressors! The Lord Almighty stands ready to make us whole on the inside.

By the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and obedience unto death we shall overcome.