Overcoming the Devil

Zanesville, OH | November 24, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Rev. 12:11

**Intro**:

* Revelation 12 commences with a presentation of the three main characters that will dominate the chapter. John sees a great sign in heaven in which he observes a woman, a child and a red dragon. The woman representative of God’s faithful people is said to be with child and about to give birth. This child represents the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, whose sole purpose is to save mankind from their sin (cf. Jn. 1:29). The third character, the red dragon, is carefully and deliberately presented in a menacing way so as to prepare us for his role not only in this chapter but also throughout the rest of the book. The dragon, representing the devil, begins an all-out assault on the child because of what He has come to do.
* The dragon stands ready to devour the child as soon as the woman gives birth but he fails when the child is caught up to the throne of God Himself. Jesus has accomplished His mission in His death, resurrection and subsequent ascension. He has defeated Satan. Satan seeks to exact revenge on God’s faithful servants because of his defeat and demise. And although defeated, Satan is still dangerous and he uses his cunning schemes to attack the people who are loyal to God.
* He seeks to harm the bodies of the saints who hold fast to Jesus and who follow Him wherever He goes not because he is more powerful than them but because he has lost the battle over their souls. He cannot overpower our souls nor can he force us to sin. He influences us to commit sin to our spiritual detriment but the choice to sin is on us. We wage a constant war of the flesh and the spirit and the devil will try to manipulate us any which way we he can so we can go down with him. The question is how do we overcome him? How can we be victorious in the face of this menacing evil? Rev. 12:11 tells us how those saints did it and how we can do it too.

1. **The Blood of The Lamb**
   1. Saints can and will overcome the devil because of Christ’s blood and what He did at the cross. It is Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection that has led to the triumph of His people and the defeat of the devil and his evil forces. Christ’s shedding of His blood is the primary basis for which the saints before and after Christ have overcome.
   2. Revelation is one of the NT books that stresses this idea on numerous occasions (Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14). Christ defeated the devil through His death and resurrection. The shedding of His blood guaranteed not only His victory but ours as well. But what exactly does it mean that we overcome because of His blood?
   3. Passages like Acts 20:28, Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5 and 7:14 tell us that it is Christ’s blood that cleanses us from our sins. It removes the disgusting problem that slavery of sin. This concept goes back to the OT with the idea that blood must be shed for sin to be pardoned. Jesus’ blood did this once for all (Heb. 9:12).
   4. But how exactly do we come in contact with this blood? This is where baptism comes into play and the importance of what it means. Rom. 6:3-7 describes exactly how we come in contact with Christ’s blood through baptism.
   5. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and that’s how He defeated Satan. If we have any hope of overcoming the devil, we need to do exactly what Jesus did. We need to die and rise and this happens through baptism. If we refuse it, we are refusing the power of God through the Lamb’s blood.
2. **The word of their testimony**
   1. The second basis for which the saints are able to overcome the devil is because of the “word of their testimony.” This phrase has a two-fold meaning. In one sense it refers to their constant keeping of the word of God. They abide in His commandments just as Jesus did (Jn. 15:10).
   2. The other sense is that their lives reveal the nature of God just as Christ’s did. Rev. 1:5 describes Christ as the faithful witness. His life reflected everything that God is and God stands for (Jn. 1:18; 3:32-33; 18:37).
   3. Jesus’ faithful testimony led to His victory. If our lives are modeled off of Jesus’ example, we will be victorious over Satan. John was exiled because of his testimony (Rev. 1:9) and Antipas was killed for his (Rev. 2:13).
   4. There is nothing more that Satan hates and that which drives him away when we preach the gospel and live out the gospel. It is the antithesis to who he is and what he preaches and when we stand up for God and live our lives as those created in the image of God we will win (cf. Matt. 4:1-10).
   5. Jesus encouraged the multitudes the work the works of God. As those who are called to be lights in a dark world, we must work as long as it is day for the night is coming when no one will be able to work (Jn. 9:4). The work Jesus speaks of is believing God by focusing on His word and living it out (Jn. 6:28-29).
3. **Love for Christ supersedes love for self**
   1. The final basis for which Christians can overcome the devil is perhaps the hardest of them all and a combination of the previous two. The greatest display of victory over the devil is taking Christ’ blood and the word of testimony and persevering even in the face of death. This demonstrates a love that places Christ first over everything else including self.
   2. The saints overcome because they love Christ more than their physical lives (cf. Matt. 10:26-39; 16:24-26; Acts 20:24; 21:13; Heb. 11:35-38). These saints who overcome are not afraid to die physically because it is the soul’s eternal destiny that matters the most and Satan cannot harm their souls (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)
   3. Real, true discipleship is standing up to Satan and maintaining our loyalty to Christ even when called upon to die. Paul was ready to die if need be. Peter and John never stuttered when threatened and James did in fact die.
   4. But not even such news would deter them from entrusting themselves to Christ first and His gospel. They loved Him more than they loved themselves. We may never be called upon to be a martyr but if we are, will we renege or continue to confess?
   5. Satan may be able harm us physically but what is the material really worth in comparison to the immaterial? What value is the temporary flesh in comparison to the eternal soul?

**Conclusion:** Overcoming the devil ultimately means avoiding the second death. Christ died once but rose from the dead never to die again (Rev. 1:17-18). To avoid Satan’ destiny is to be victorious. If we come in contact with Christ’s blood, if we hold to the word of testimony and if we love Christ more than we love self and everything else then we will live forever and ever. All these points however speak one simple truth, one simple concept: **The only way we will overcome Satan is with God on our side.** There is no sense in which we will be able to independently fight him off. But with Christ on our side where He belongs, He has no power and no way to win unless we give it to him. Have you come in contact with Christ’s blood through baptism? Are you willing to keep the word and live it out? Are you willing to deny self and love Christ more than everything and everyone else?