



The Red Dragon

Part 1 of 2

Brother Emerson A. Wilson

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard aloud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Three Heavens

We found in a previous message that the pure woman was the holy mother church, the church of the Living God. We also affirmed that the man child was the host of converts that the morning-time church brought forth. As we consider the dragon, we want you to see that, according to the Bible, he is stationed in the same heaven as the woman. John said that he saw a woman in heaven, and he also saw the dragon in the same position as the woman.

When the Scripture begins to talk about war in heaven, many people quickly form the conclusion that John actually saw a battle going on over in God's Heaven and saw the devil being kicked out. The theory that the devil was once an angel and was kicked out of Heaven therefore begins to fill the minds of men and women. Friend, just a little serious thought on the Scripture will remove all thought of this being God's Heaven, or God's dwelling place.

The Bible, first of all, teaches of three heavens. God's dwelling place, before He made the heavens and the earth, is spoken of in the Scripture as being high above all heavens. When Jesus ascended from the earth, Paul said that He ascended high above, or far above, all heavens. So, God has a dwelling place called Heaven. He created the heavens and the earth, referring to that heaven in the firmament where the stars, the sun, and the moon are. Then there is a third heaven, a spiritual heaven, spoken of in the Bible. Ephesians, Chapter 2, teaches us how we, who have been quickened from a dead state in sin by a real born-again experience, are caught up into heavenly places in Christ Jesus, or in the body of Christ. We did not leave the earth or get out of this body, in that sense, but we are still in heavenly places.

All you have to do is read verse 9 to understand that John is not seeing a battle or a dragon laboring against the woman's children over in God's Heaven, as preachers tell you. Verse 9 says that the dragon was cast out into the earth. Verse 13 lets us know that the woman was not cast out into the earth, yet the dragon went on and made war against the woman. Verse 5, speaking of the converts who were martyred and killed, says that they were caught up to Heaven, or up to God and to His throne. Well, if they were already in God's Heaven here, how could they be caught up to that Heaven?

Friend, we want you to understand that when John saw this vision, it was merely of a high, lifted up heavenly position, the position the church stands in. Ever since the Church of God came into existence, she has been in a heavenly place, far above the man-made religions of this world. The reason being, any church that men start or govern is only lifted as high as men can lift it, but the highest Himself has exalted Zion. He has put her in the top of the mountain, high above the hills—in figurative speech—in a heavenly position.

Christianity's First Opposer

The Bible tells us that the dragon's position here is against the woman. He wants to devour, and did devour her man child, or her early converts, as soon as they were born. Since he is so against the true church, and since he is out to kill her converts, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is an opposing power of the church and the truth that she stands for. He is not only against the truth she stands for, but he is against her ministry. According to prophecy, he is the opposing power that the church ran into after Christ brought forth the church in the "labor room" on Mount Calvary. She was sent forth on the Day of Pentecost with a mission to go to the uttermost parts of the earth with the good tidings of the Gospel message. Here is the first opposition that she ran into—an opposing power that the devil was using to stop the work of the church, to hinder the work of the church, or to kill her converts in one way or another.

All Bible students agree that the first opposer of Christ and the early-morning church was paganism, or Pagan Rome. Rome dominated the whole then-known world. In Luke, Chapter 2, you can read that when Christ was born, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be taxed. Rome's authority governed the whole then-known world. We realize that they did not know about the western hemisphere; as far as they were concerned, Asia was the world, and Rome governed the whole then-known world.

So this red dragon symbolizes the pagan Roman Empire; its seven heads symbolize the seven forms of government that the pagan Roman Empire was under, and the ten horns symbolize the ten kingdoms, or ten powers, that Rome was divided into after she fell. That great red dragon is simply a symbolic picture of the pagan Roman Empire, just as the woman is a symbolic picture of the church of the Living God.

Countless people call this great red dragon the devil, but this is not the devil; this is the pagan Roman Empire that the devil was working through. It is necessary we understand this because when we study about the dragon being cast down, we are going to find that the devil did not get cast down; the devil only changed his clothes and stayed right up in that ecclesiastical position all the way through here. The dragon only symbolizes a system that the devil is working through to work against the church.

The devil does not have seven heads and ten horns; the devil is a spirit, just like God is a Spirit. He does not even have two horns and a tail; that is only fantasy. The devil is a spirit, and he is bound. He can only work through some substance. At this particular time, he was working against the true church through the pagan Roman Empire. So, when we talk about this dragon, we want to make it plain: he is only a symbol of the first opposer of true Christianity—the pagan Roman Empire. Even though the Jews made the decision to have Christ crucified, it was the Roman Empire that carried it out.

Someone may question: "Why did it have to be a great red dragon to symbolize the Roman Empire? How can you say that is the Roman Empire with seven heads and ten horns?" The standard for pagan Rome, or their insignia, was a great red dragon. The Grecian insignia was a he-goat; Great Britain's insignia is a circle of lions on a red field; our insignia is the American eagle. When God gave John the vision, he understood it well because these happenings were in his day. When God showed him a great dragon rising up and killing the Christians, he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was the pagan Roman Empire. You and I can also know it beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Spiritual Darkness Produces Infidelity

Let us read verse 7: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Here we see this dragon, the pagan Roman Empire, as accompanied by angels, or as the Greek says "messengers, or ministers." These messengers, or ministers, who fought with the dragon were actually filled and operating by his spirit, fighting against the cause of God. In other words, we see the dragon and his ministers fighting against Michael and His ministers.

I want you to see the pagan Roman Empire as being a political, religious system. The reason we know it is a religious system is because it was fighting against the truth. It was up in an ecclesiastical position! It was fighting more than laws of the land; it was fighting against spiritual things.

When we go back and study what the pagan Roman Empire really stood for, we can see in a greater way why there was such a battle here. The pagan Roman Empire held to a religion that denied the doctrine of one exclusive God and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The pagan Roman Empire had a religion of infidelity.

A reason for this was that from Malachi to John the Baptist were four hundred years when man never heard from God. The reason being, old Israel asked God not to speak to them. They wanted somebody to speak smooth things and deceit. This is the same reason that the Word of God has left many church organizations and congregations today. All you have to do is put forth the attitude, "God, I do not want to hear what You have to say," and you will not hear what God has to say. Those people in the Old Testament did not want to hear from God. They wanted someone to teach them smooth things and preach deceit to them; so God hushed. For more than four hundred years

man never heard from God, the period of time from Malachi to John the Baptist.

Since man did not hear from God, the devil was having a field day down there. He had men worshiping gods of stone, wood, hay, iron, gold, and all kinds of images imaginable, and the pagan Roman Empire went right along with that. They did not care how many gods you had, as long as you did not say anything against anybody else's god. Right into that mess came Jesus Christ with the truth, teaching that God is exclusive, that there is only one God, that every other god is false, and that God is a jealous God. God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). A battle started. Everything was in a kind of peaceful coexistence until Jesus started preaching.

Righteous Division

This is the kind of battle that John was talking about. Michael symbolizes Christ in this Scripture. Verse 9 of Jude will tell you that Michael is the archangel. First Thessalonians 4:16 tells us that the Lord, with the voice of the archangel, is going to raise the dead. Jesus, Himself speaking, said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [the Son of God] voice, And shall come forth" (John 5:28-29). So Michael is the archangel; the archangel means "chief of angels." Revelation, Chapter 1, tells us that God gave the Revelation unto John through His Angel. Who was the Angel? When John turned around to see who was talking to him, he saw Jesus. So Michael, in the Bible, is speaking of Christ.

Christ and His ministers fought against the dragon, or the pagan Roman Empire, and his ministers. A battle took place. The Roman Empire was built on absolutism of state; it made nothing of personal rights. This was offensive to Christianity, and it still is. Brother, true Christianity today is against absolutism of state. What do I mean? That the state reigns over the church to the place that the state can dictate and tell you how you can worship and where you can worship. A forced religion is no religion at all.

So when Christians refused the idolatrous ceremonies that Rome set forth, they were persecuted and killed. Here is where the great martyrdom began, pictured as the man child, the converts, being caught up to God. How did the dragon kill? Through martyrdom.

The pagan Roman Emperor demanded worship that the Christians could not give. I want to tell you right now, if you get right down to strict Christianity, there are many things you cannot dabble around with the religion of our day and be a true Christian and be true to Christ. Some people feel their spiritual backbone must be made of rubber because they can bow to most anything and think they can be true to Christ. Back in that very day and time, just being a Christian was a crime.

They were so against true Christianity because true Christianity would not make room for any other kind of religion, and it will not yet today. That old dragon spirit fights me from every side, saying, "You need to be a little more sociable. You need to bow; you need to let go of some of your scruples and kind of line up with other religions." True Christianity will not recognize any other religion. There is only one true religion, and every other one is false. You will stir up plenty of devils today if you take that kind of stand.

True Christianity still calls for a division, a righteous division. It not only comes down between religious organizations; the Bible says it comes right down in the home. You must tell your family that you love them but God is first. You will see some companions getting saved when you take that kind of stand. You have to be wise enough to realize that this is a spiritual conflict; it is not a person (husband, wife, etc.) who is fighting you; it is the devil who is fighting you.

The Accuser of the Brethren

In those days, it was a crime to be a Christian. Because Christians failed to burn incense on pagan altars, they were despised, hated, and persecuted. Any disaster that happened in the empire was blamed on the Christians. That is why this dragon is called the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). If they had a drought and it did not rain, they killed a thousand Christians: they said that it was the Christians' fault.

Why was it reportedly the Christians' fault? Well, the goddess of pagan Rome that most of them worshiped was not made of gold or silver; it was an eternal light that kept burning. (It was carried over here from the old country and sold to you to put on your grave. Come on, the old dragon just sits back and laughs to see our graveyards in Christian America with a little, old everlasting light. The last time I was in there, all those everlasting lights had gone out.)

That god was a god of everlasting light, and the Christian was forced by the Roman Emperor to come and burn just a little incense. They would tell them, "You do not have to forget about your God; you can still love your God, but burn just a little incense to our god." They refused to do it, and when they refused to do it, if it did not rain for three weeks, they would kill a thousand Christians, accusing them that they had made their god angry and she held the rain back. Then if the rains came too strong and they had a flood, they would kill a few more thousand, saying

the Christians had made their god angry, because they would not burn incense to it. No matter whether there were good times or bad times, whatever happened was blamed on the Christians.

Isn't that a picture of some who are trying to live for the Lord today? The devil is against your being a Christian; he is against my being a Christian. The reason we need to get a deep, settled experience is because the devil has many, many out in the world to work through against you. There are many more against you than there are for you, so there is not any need looking to people. There is no need trying to rest on brothers and sisters; you might as well get it fixed and settled in Jesus Christ alone as the One who can take you through. If you will get it settled there, He will take you through.

They Counted the Cost

Someone may contend: "He did not take the church through here. About sixty million were killed. Is that taking them through?" Well, do not forget that Jesus holds the keys of Hades and death. My friend, He promised never to let us be troubled or tempted beyond that which we are able to bear. He was with everyone who was martyred. When they came to the limit of what they could take, thank God, He unlocked Hades, and they went to be with Him which is far better.

They were tortured because they made the gods angry. Nero gloated in seeing human blood flowing in the arena with wild beasts. He had dozens of Christians killed, night after night. I want you to see what a devil-possessed, corrupt individual this ruler was. He found pleasure in watching men, women, and children thrown to hungry lions, and watching the lions tear them up for a couple of hours.

Nero had the Christians put alive in waxen shirts and fastened to axletrees, using the women's long hair for a wick. With these human candles, he lighted his garden while he drank liquor. Read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. It will do you good. As I mention some of these things, you need to remember that in places where the darkness of this old red dragon still rules, through Communism and some of the others, they are carrying out exactly the same things. No doubt that is where they learned some of their torture tactics.

Nero had his own mother killed to please another man's wife that he wanted. Later he took the man's wife for his wife. He set the city of Rome on fire and watched it burn from the top of a high tower, then blamed the Christians for it and killed several thousand of them. He killed that new wife by kicking her in the stomach while she was with child until she died at his feet. He proposed to his own sister and killed her because she refused him. He walked away from her and had another man killed and took his wife. In his rage, he killed the Apostle Paul—I am talking about the dragon and his messengers, or his ministers, warring against Christ and His ministers.

I want to state right here that Christianity never fought to overthrow a civil empire and never will. Christianity was not fighting against the Roman Empire. Nowhere in the Bible, or in history, can you find where Christianity ever used carnal weapons. Not once did the Christians strike back with a carnal weapon. I want to repeat, she was not fighting against the Roman Empire, but she was fighting against that false religion which guided the Roman Empire to carry on in such a way.

Satan's Devices

Someone may say, "I did not know the devil had angels." Paul, in approximately A.D. 66 or 67, was right in some of that massacre. He lost his head on Nero's chopping block. He said in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Paul was teaching the church that the devil had ministers.

John also saw those angels, or those ministers, who belonged to the dragon, fighting for the falsity of their religion. He saw them get stirred because the true messengers of the Gospel would not back off the truth.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, ". . . we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices." My friend, we are preaching about the first device that Satan used against the morning-time church. Since then, he has used many devices, and Paul said that we are not ignorant of his devices. We could go clear back to the beginning when he used a serpent against Eve; against Adam, he used Eve; against Samson, he used Delilah; against Peter, he used a young damsel.

Too many get the idea that he is always as a roaring lion going around seeking whom he may devour. No! He may come around as a beautiful young girl. He may come around as a handsome young man, telling you, "If you are going to marry me, you are going to quit that church." Saint, when anybody or anything wants you to quit the Church of God, it is the devil no matter what color his hair is or how good looking he is. You need to study up on Satan's devices. He did not come as a roaring lion to Samson. No! When the roaring lion came, Samson just took hold of him and skinned him, but a pretty young girl who was a harlot got him. Satan has many devices, many more than I could

cover in one message.

Someone may wonder, "How are you going to know whether it is the devil using something on you?" When anything or anybody tries to daunt your zeal in living for God by causing you to turn your mind away from truth or by causing you to cut corners, mark it as of the devil. Even if they claim to be a good brother or sister in the church, the devil is using them. Too many people are knocked out of the Christian race because they think the only thing they have to watch for is the world or deep sin. No, my friend, there are still tares in the wheat. There are still people who are not up to par spiritually, and when one is not up to par spiritually, he or she is in good shape to become a tool of the devil.

Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Sometimes he uses a wife or a husband. Sometimes he will come as an angel of light. He might use a preacher to tell you: "I have the very light you stand in need of. Thank God for every bit of light that you have, but I have some light that you cannot get at the Church of God." Well, I am going to tell you right now, you need to be afraid of any light that you cannot get at the true Church of God. She is the lighthouse. If God has any greater light, He will send it through the church. God has never gotten so hard up that He had to send light through false Pentecostalism or Babylon. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Message from the November 1984 issue of *The Gospel Trumpeter*
www.GospelTrumpeter.com

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The Red Dragon

Part 2 of 2

Casting Down the Dragon

When Paul visited the city of Athens, it was wholly and completely given to idolatry. The dragon ruled there; the Pagan Roman Empire had complete control of that city. Now Paul was not as modern people who say, "If I preach truth here, it will just stir up trouble and cause a lot of problems, so the best thing I could do is just slip on away from here." No, Paul got right in the middle of it and began to cry out a message about the unknown God. He said, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23).

In Acts, Chapter 19, we read about how the city of Ephesus was wholly given to idolatry, and Paul preached the truth there. Many people confessed, burned their books of curious arts, the Word of God grew and prevailed, and the dragon was cast down. Idolatry had been lifted to the very religion of that country, that city, and that people, but when the Word of God prevailed through Paul's preaching, one of Christ's angels, the dragon was cast down.

Follow through the Acts of the Apostles: even before the Apostles died, history tells us that the temples of the gods were completely forsaken for true Christianity. They turned the world upside down. If they would have kept that fire, zeal, and trueness to God, they would have turned our world upside down. A little later, though, the devil turned around to attack the woman, the church, and he did it through lukewarmness and carelessness. He cooled off the church, and there was a falling away, even after they had cast the dragon, paganism, down to the earth.

You may question, "What do you mean by 'cast down to the earth'?" Paganism had been exalted as a religion. He wanted to be a religion right along with true Christianity, but true Christianity will not let anything be exalted beside it, not even you or me. When the truth went forth and the Word of God prevailed, the dragon (paganism, idolatry, infidelity) was cast down to the earth. It was no longer to be held as a religion, but was proven to be earthly and devilish, with no God in it whatsoever. That is what the Revelation means when it speaks of being cast down to the earth.

Satan, or the Adversary

Revelation 12:9 tells us, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Many people cannot see the dragon as paganism because the Bible says he is called the devil and Satan. We made it plain earlier in the lesson that the devil is a spirit; he is not some beast with seven heads and ten horns. That only symbolizes the pagan Roman Empire that the devil was working through.

Among the Hebrews, the word *Satan* is used in a very literal sense. The word *devil* in the Greek is actually translated as "accuser or slanderer." The word *Satan* in the Hebrew is translated "adversary, opposer, or accuser." This is exactly what it means when it says "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole

[then-known] world." My friend, it is using it in the sense of him being an accuser, or an opposer.

I will give you some living expressions of it in the Bible. When Balaam failed God and went against God, God tried to talk to him, but could not stop him that way. Numbers 22:22a tells us, "And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." The King James Version says that the angel of the Lord was an adversary, or a Satan, against him. Here the angel of the Lord is called Satan because the Hebrew actually means that he was an adversary. He was working against Balaam trying to stop him.

The words Satan and devil, in the light of Bible language, are used in lots of different ways. In 1 Samuel 29:4, David is called an adversary, or Satan, to the Philistines. David was called a Satan to the Philistines because he was against the Philistines. In Matthew 16:23 Jesus called Peter, Satan. He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan. . . ." If you say that the dragon was the devil, because he was called Satan, then you have to say that Peter was the devil. Jesus called Peter, Satan, because he was an adversary, or opposer to the will of God.

Jesus Is Called an Adversary

Matthew 5:25 tells you to agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with Him. There, Jesus is spoken of as an adversary. The Greek translation says, "Agree quickly with your Satan, while you are in the way with him." Jesus is called an adversary to the sinner because the sinner is opposing Him, and you feel He is against you. The Bible tells you to agree with Him quickly, while He is dealing with you, or while He is in the way with you. Why? You can go on by the hour that God is dealing with you in conviction; you can be sealed in sin.

In Matthew 23:33 Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees "serpents." In Revelation 12:9 this dragon is called "that old serpent." You may wonder, "Why is he called a serpent?" When God made Adam in the Garden of Eden, He took a rib out of his side and brought forth his bride. Just as soon as the bride came forth, the serpent was there to beguile the first Adam's wife. Now, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, went to Calvary, and out of His side flowed blood and water that purchased the Church of God, the bride of Christ. As soon as the second Adam brought forth His bride, right here was this serpent, ready to beguile, destroy, and knock her out. So, my friend, the Pagan Roman Empire is spoken of as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" because it is an opposer, or an adversary, against true Christianity.

In no way, however, did it say that the dragon was the devil himself. You may contend, "Are you sure? I thought this is where the devil was cast out." My friend, nowhere in the Bible does it say that God cast this dragon down; the ministry cast him down. Revelation 12:10-11 tells us: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." The ones who were battling him cast him down and overcame him. I hope I have made it plain to you that the dragon is the Pagan Roman Empire. Nowhere does the Bible even suggest that the devil was kicked down. He is still operating; it was the dragon that was put out of business for that particular time. The devil then changed his clothes and came up another way.

There Is Power in the Blood

Let us now consider verse 11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Have you ever wondered how they overcame this dragon by the blood of the Lamb? We know that the blood of the Lamb cleanses from all sin, but just being free from sin, or cleansed from sin, would not give you power to overcome the dragon. There must be some deeper truth in John's language about the blood of Lamb. There was something about the blood of the Lamb that made them overcomers. Regardless of what the devil threw at them, even terrible, gruesome torture, they overcame it, put it down, and lived consistently right down to the minute they died.

In this day where people are giving up so easily, we need to get a deeper vision of the blood of Jesus Christ. There are people who claim to be Christians who are going to have to get a greater hold on the blood of Jesus Christ, or they are not going to make it. None of us have resisted unto blood. Brother, the blood of the Lamb is still the blood of the Lamb. When you truly get hold of it and let it work in your life, it will produce the same experience as it did back there.

It is a proven fact that you could not take martyrdom, the fire, or the persecution that they took by just resting on the fact that blood of Jesus has cleansed from all sin. There must be something more about the blood. Just the fact that you know you are clean does not give you power against the enemy of your soul. The blood of Jesus Christ does more for us just cleanse us from all sin.

There were two things that enabled them to overcome, and the first positive, powerful one was the blood of Jesus. If we ever overcome, we are going to have to use the same means that God afforded for the church in the first period

of time. The Scripture said that they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, or they overcame because of the blood of the Lamb. We have to face the fact that Christ may bid some of us to die for Him. I do not know that, and neither do you. We may have to sign our testimony with our own blood one of these days, but if we are never called to die for Him, He has called us to live for Him. If we do not do the lesser, we will never do the higher and more glorious.

What is the higher and more glorious? To be able to lay down our lives for Him. It is very easy to testify that you would die for Jesus, but you cannot die for Him unless you live for Him. Friend, if we cannot overcome in life, we cannot overcome in death. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.

The conflict with evil is really a spiritual conflict carried on first within us. Mark it down, before any one of those martyrs went to a burning stake, they had a great battle within before they ever had a battle without. They had to settle the battle within. Right here is where the failure is. My friend, the first approach of the enemy is the battle within the mind. Much of the area of Armageddon is fought within the mind. There must be a work that is wrought within us through the blood of Jesus Christ, whereby we can live a settled life in the inner man. Unless we find that settled peace in the inner man, we will never be able to live it out.

The Life Is in the Blood

Paul said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear . . ." (Colossians 3:4). Over and over, he teaches the fact to the church that Christ is our life. What does that have to do with the blood? John the Baptist was the first to cry out, when that beautiful young man appeared where he was baptizing, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). That is as far as he went with it. The Apostle John, however, in First, Second, and Third John, in St. John, and in the Revelation, went into a deeper study of the Lamb of God. The word *Lamb* to John meant much more than just the general, submissive, loving character that Christ possessed.

All through his writings, John associated the figure of the Lamb with sacrifice. In Revelation 5:5-6, when the book could not be opened, and the Lion of the Tribe of Juda took hold and opened it, John said he saw "a Lamb as it had been slain." In Revelation 13:8 he said it was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Every time he dealt with the Lamb, he dealt with it as a slain Lamb, or a Lamb that was offered in sacrifice.

He taught that Christ was a Lamb that was offered as a sacrifice for the removal of sin, and a deeper something was in the blood of the Lamb. What was it? God began teaching in the days of Noah, when they first began to bring animal sacrifices, that the blood shed stands for a life yielded. Moses was to teach the people that the life was in the blood. Not only was blood being spilled for their sins, but a life was being given. In those days, it was the life of the animal. We all know that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, but the picture God wanted to hold before them was that the life was in the blood. Even though the blood of animals could not deliver them, yet it was a schoolmaster, or a shadow, to teach them that deliverance from sin took more than spilled blood; it took a life given. The life was in the blood; when the blood was spilled, the animal laid down, its life.

As God held that before them, that the life was in the blood, He holds it true right over into the New Testament. In Hebrews 9:13-14, Paul made it very plain: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

How did Jesus offer His blood? He gave Himself to God. How did He give Himself? He laid down this earthly body through the eternal Spirit. When He gave Himself to God, His blood that was spilled cleanses and sanctifies you, or sets you apart, and the very life that was given in the blood makes you able to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life. When He offered His blood, He offered it through the eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit. He offered Himself to God on Calvary's Cross, and since He rose from the dead and went back to Heaven, He offers the blood to every sinner through the eternal Spirit. My friend, when we come in old-time repentance, confessing our sins to God through a work of the eternal Spirit, the blood of Jesus Christ, through faith in His blood, cleanses us from all sin. Through the Holy Spirit, the life that Jesus lay down is brought into us, and we can live just as Jesus lives.

Christ-Life

How did they overcome through the blood? Through the life of the blood. It is the same way you and I overcome. We can be cleansed through faith in His blood, but if we overcome, it will take some life within us. That is why Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . ." (Galatians 2:20). We can be more than conquerors through Christ that lives within us. Christ met the prince of this world, and He overcame him. Sixty million martyrs met the best that the devil could throw at them, and they overcame him with the blood of the Lamb, or with the life of the Lamb. The same life was in them that was in Jesus. How did it affect them? They loved

not their lives unto the death.

Too many professing Christians cannot enjoy this kind of life because they love their lives too well. When you want your way, and have reserves that you will not give up for anybody, you will never find this life. Jesus made it plain in Luke's Gospel that if you ever find this life, you have to hate your life.

Whenever the blood is applied through faith to your life that cleanses you from all sin, the life of Christ also comes in. The blood is not reaching these people who only see cleansing, and no power to live right. Many times, it is not their fault, because they are not being taught. All they see in Christ is the Lamb of God that just keeps them under the blood while they still live in sin: there is no overcoming in that kind of life.

They cannot overcome the devil when he comes around and says, "Here's a Lucky Strike cigarette. Take it."

You may say, "Well, I cannot help myself, and Jesus will forgive me tonight."

There is no overcoming in that. If you cannot overcome a cigarette, you cannot overcome a burning stake!

There is overcoming power in the blood of the Lamb. Why? It is just as the animal that was killed: his blood was not only spilled, but his life was also laid down. Now there was no way in the Old Testament for them to take on the life of the animal. Jesus, however, laid down His life and shed His blood, through the eternal Spirit (in other words, the inner man took the outer man and laid Him on the altar and slew Him there), and when you come in old-time repentance, that same Holy Spirit that He offered Himself to God through, works on your heart and life to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus.

I hope you are able to see that there is something more about the blood than just a cleansing action. Christ-life is given to us when we take faith in His blood. So, the New Testament teaches the church that it is Christ in you, or Christ formed in you (Galatians 4:19). So, we overcome that which is ready to devour all goodness by the virtue of the blood of the Lamb, or the Christ-life that is in us. Here is the assurance of victory over all the forms of evil. Not only did they overcome back then, but we can overcome today. The life-giving power through the blood gave them victory.

By the Word of Their Testimony

They overcame, first, by the blood of the Lamb, and secondly, by the word of their testimony. We must have the real inner life, and an open confession. Why an open confession? Why did there have to be the testimony? Life only keeps healthy when it finds expression and exercise. Any life, even physical life, must have exercise and expression. You cannot keep this life of Christ down inside without an open expression, or testimony. If you do not tell it, you will lose it.

Not only did the early Christians believe in the life of the blood, but they were not fearful to testify. Whenever the life of Christ is working in the inner man, you will lose your fear to speak it out. Those early Christians lay down their lives for the word of their testimony.

Someone may ask, "How did that overcome the dragon?" My friend, this is the power that brought him down. Every time a martyr would stand with a real burning testimony of what Jesus had done for him, and he would not blaspheme Him, they would kill him. It was nothing to see twenty-five people fall on their knees and give their hearts to God because of one martyr's testimony.

Our world could be reached the same way if we would get the real life of the blood, the life of Christ, working within us, and then fearlessly stand against wrong. People know that you do not have to have time to make up your mind. It is already made up: "I'll serve Jesus if it kills me." Here is salvation, and we need to take a fresh look at it. Jesus can do more for man than he is doing for a lot of people who claim to be Christians. Revelation 12:10 tells us, ". . . Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down. . . ."

There is power through our Christ to put the devil down, any way he comes. That is salvation! I want to tell you, friend, we need a good shaking, and God is doing His best to shake us and get us ready. There is only one way to overcome through the life that is in the blood of the Lamb. That life will enable us to walk up to the chopping block, if necessary, as Paul did. Let us overcome. The life is in the blood, and it will make us overcomers.

Message from *The Gospel Trumpeter* December 1984

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