

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB
(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2021)

Scripture Reading: 10 Commandments; Revelation 12

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2020 Census, the population of our state was down 0.1% in the past 10 years, but the US population grew by 7.4% to 331.4 million.

I bring up these statistics, because our nation, though not the largest, is still a very populous country and circumstances in our nation are quite diverse.

I have shared and we have prayed about the stories of Christian business owners across the nation that have come under special harassment for standing for truth – Jack Philips, Barronelle Stutzman, Jim and Beth Walder, Aaron and Melissa Klein.

Let us say there were a 1000 Christians who had a similar story. Given our nation is so large, these 1000 stories or more would still seem very small in comparison to everything else that is going on in our nation – good and bad.

My point is that though we do not ignore what some Christians are facing, generally speaking there is little persecution for most Christians because of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The vast majority of Christians in our nation have not been arrested, fined, or imprisoned.

This well could change in coming days.

We have witnessed tremendous changes in just a few years.

Six years ago, someone as prominent as Hillary Clinton was saying “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases **have to be changed**... not just in far away countries but right here in the United States.”¹

Back in April, Pres. Biden stated: "We won't ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to our homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism," Biden said. "We're not going to ignore that either."²

Just in the last several weeks and months, many people in our nation have been very concerned about their own jobs because of mandated vaccinations.

A good number of conservative organizations have been removed from social media sites. Some Christian businessmen have also had financial institutions refuse to do business with them.

The website provider Go-Daddy recently refused to host pro-life websites in Texas.

What are we to do in the face of all these changes?

1Pet. 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

1Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. **9** Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

¹ <http://nation.foxnews.com/2015/04/27/hillary-religious-beliefs-must-change-sake-abortion>

² <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/white-supremacy-most-lethal-threat-to-america-biden-says/ar-BB1gaa5Q>

Six years ago, I preached three sermons about persecution.

One of the passages that we considered was from Rev. 12.

In the face of uncertainty and possible persecution of different sorts, I wanted to again focus on this important verse.

Rev. 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

If you have not memorized this verse, I hope you will do so.

[I have a handout talking about this chapter as a whole.] Our focus today will be on this verse, which will look at in three parts.

How do we face and endure persecution?

It is by the power of God through the blood of the Lamb and the word our witness.

We must not love our own lives more than the Lord Jesus Christ and His truth.

1. THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Revelation 12 in the words of one commentator “has always been, consciously or not, considered as the center and the key to the entire book.”³

I am not going to seek to present much more introduction than this important statement.

Revelation is a book that speaks of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the call that His true people are given to suffer and overcome.

³ Prigent, *Apocalypse 12*, 1. Cited by Greg Beale, *Revelation (NIGTC)*, 621.

If Revelation 12 is the central chapter of the book, then in verse 11 we also find the heart of the book of Revelation.

Revelation is the unveiling of the word of Jesus Christ.

He is the great overcomer. It is Jesus Christ who then calls His people to also overcome.

Overcome as you might know is related to the word nike, as in the shoe company.

The verb is used 17x in Revelation.

The verb is used eight times in the seven letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3.

Rev. 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

This is always the call given to the church – to overcome.

How is it that believers overcome?

Two things are stated with a third characteristic given.

First, we overcome because or by the **blood of the Lamb!**

The reason for our victory has nothing to do with who we are. No, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that is the basis for triumph.

The words “blood of the Lamb” are used in only one other passage, Rev. 7:14.

Rev. 7:14 And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

How is it that we overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb?

First, in our cleansing, we are set free from the power of Satan and his accusations against us.

Satan is the great accuser of the brethren.

But for God’s people, he has nothing to use against us any longer.

Do you know the full peace and assurance of sins forgiven?

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? **33** Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. **34** Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Second, with this cleansing and assurance comes a new calling as God’s people. This theme is set forth right at the beginning of this book.

Rev. 1:5b To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, **6** and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Third, our calling is connected with the death of Christ and also His life.

The calling of the believer is not to a life of ease or endless bliss.

But we recognize we do not live in our own strength or resources.

Listen to the words of Paul from 2 Cor. 4.

2 Cor. 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. **11** For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So then death is working in us, but life in you.

A book that we should again be reading is what we know today as *Fox's Book of Martyrs*.

I looked the up the phrase **blood of the lamb** in this book and found just one instance of its use in telling the story of the five final martyrs during the time of Queen Mary better known as Bloody Mary.

This testimony comes from the year 1558.

The final five martyrs were: J. Corneford; C. Browne; J. Herst; Alice Snoth; and Catherine Knight, an aged woman.

Listen to the account of these five faithful believers.

"These five martyrs, when at the stake, earnestly prayed that their blood might be the last shed, nor did they pray in vain. They died gloriously, and perfected the number God had selected to hear witness of the truth in this dreadful reign; whose names are recorded in the Book of Life; though last, not least among the saints made meet for immortality through the redeeming blood of the Lamb!

Catharine Finlay, alias Knight, was first converted by her son's expounding the Scriptures to her, which wrought in her a perfect work that terminated in martyrdom.

Alice Snot at the stake sent for her grandmother and godfather, and rehearsed to them the articles of her faith, and the commandments of God, thereby convincing the world that she knew her duty. She died calling upon the spectators to bear witness that she was a Christian woman, and suffered joyfully for the testimony of Christ's gospel.

The overcoming is not because of our own strength.

One reason I think why we find the testimony of Peter's denial in the four gospels is that it is a sober warning and reminder.

We should never boast about our resolve or strength.

Boast in the blood of the Lamb.

2. THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY

Second, verse 12 speaks of the **word of their testimony**.

The word **testimony** is another significant word in Revelation.

The word **martyr** comes from the root of this word.

We think of a martyr as someone who dies because of faith in Jesus Christ.

More broadly a martyr is a **witness of the Lord Jesus Christ**. As such a martyr then also brings a witness against those who would speak and do evil.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness.

Look at the start of Revelation.

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, **2** who bore **witness** to the word of God, and to the **testimony** of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

Rev. 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the **testimony** of Jesus Christ.

It is because we are witnesses of Jesus Christ that we can endure suffering and satanic persecution.

Rev. 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the **word of God and for the testimony** which they held.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the **testimony of Jesus Christ**.

We overcome because of the blood of Christ and because of the **glorious message of the gospel**, which is our witness, our testimony.

Now, I have mentioned something very insidious in how satan seeks to attack and pervert the church of Jesus Christ.

Recall from from the parable of the sower how Jesus also spoke of the **cares of this world** and the **deceitfulness of riches**.

Persecution exposes some who profess to be Christians to truly not be. But so do also the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.

Indeed, in our nation these have been satan's chief weapons. We may face others, but still for most Christians we are not worried or concerned about the secret police invading our homes or shutting down this worship service.

We must overcome all of satan's devices through the blood of the Lamb and our witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. THEY DID NOT LOVE THEIR LIVES TO THE DEATH

Third, from verse 12, we have the description of those who endure suffering to the point of death.

They did not love their lives to the death.

They did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. (NET)

They did not love their lives in the face of death. (HCSB)

This is an important ending of this verse. Overcoming does not mean the absence of suffering or death.

In Rev. 13:7 we have the same verb overcome used for the beast having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev. 13:7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

From one perspective it often appears that the enemies of God and His truth overcome God's people.

One only needs to consider how in the 20th century **more believers died for the faith than in the previous 19 centuries.**

And yet even in death there is an overcoming.

Paul in Ephesians 5 says that one thing all people have in common is self-love.

Ephesians 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh...

We all love ourselves very much.

There is no denying this.

The problem is not that we love ourselves, but whether we love ourselves more than we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem is that some love themselves and shrink from death.

It is not that we ignore life here on earth, **but what truly can the enemy do unto us?**

This is where we have strong evidence of God's grace and power when we can love God and His truth more than we love ourselves or just the pursuit of this life's pleasures and treasures.

Conclusion and Preparation for Communion

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Connection with the Lord's Supper.

- Union and communion
- Full assurance
- This is our testimony
- Lord, may I love you more than I love myself

Prayer

Hymn: 439

Benediction – Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.