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# MORE THAN CONQUERORS



*A Series Of Five Sermons On The Victories God Has Granted To His People*

Gene Taylor

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# Preface

This series of five sermons emphasizes the theme: **“More Than Conquerors.”** In Romans 8:37, the apostle Paul wrote, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

The lessons in this series are five distinct areas which demonstrate not only the victories that God granted to His people in every age but also the victories that are available to us today in Jesus Christ. They include “The Whole Armor of God;” “The Victory of Gideon;” “The Courageous Victory of David;” “The Victory of Elijah;” and “The Victory In Jesus.”

These sermons may be presented as a series or independently for each lesson is complete in and of itself and does not build on previous lessons.

Gene Taylor

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# The Whole Armor of God

## Introduction

1. Near the end of his life, Paul was constantly surrounded by Roman soldiers.
  - a. He lived in the presence of the greatest military power ever known.
  - b. Night and day a soldier was with Paul to ensure he would not escape.
  - c. The Roman legion is considered to be the world's first professional army.
  - d. Their armor was distinctive, and with it they subdued the world.
  - e. Paul used figures of speech which reflected what he saw daily.
    1. He told Timothy to "wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18).
    2. Paul also told Timothy to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 2:3)
2. Christians are to put on the "whole armor of God." (Eph. 6:10-17)
  - a. "Panoply" was the whole armor of the heavily armed Roman soldier.
  - b. We must position ourselves to stand for the truth. (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14)
  - c. We must possess unblemished character; zeal tempered with wisdom; and knowledge of Word.
  - d. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon us making a stand.
  - e. Since we are not fighting a fleshly battle, our weaponry must not be carnal. (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

## I. The Armor Of God - Ephesians 6:10-17

### A. Girdle of truth.

1. This was not an ornament—it bound the other pieces together and gave the soldier freedom of movement.
2. We move about this world more freely because we know the truth!
3. The center of our armor is truth. (John 17:17)
4. The NEB renders this clause, "Buckle on the belt with truth."

### B. Breastplate of righteousness.

1. On first century reliefs only the centurions had metal cuirasses (breastplates); the common foot soldier had a leather corselet with leather shoulder pieces.
2. The breastplate of a Roman spear man was used to protect the heart and other vital organs.
3. Our heart is to be covered by righteousness. (Psa. 119:11)
4. Words are no defense against accusations, but a righteous life is.

### C. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

1. "But most important of all were his heavy boots (*caligae*), or rather sandals, which were in many ways more serviceable than modern army boots. Their soles, made of several layers of leather and heavily studded with hollow-headed

nails, varied considerably in thickness; perhaps three-quarters of an inch was about the average. Strips of cloth or fur were sometimes placed inside the sandals, and they were fastened to the foot by ankle thongs." (Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, p. xx)

2. These boots would give the soldier a firm footing during battle.
3. They were designed to make it difficult to walk backwards.
4. Our footing must be supplied by the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15) and we should never retreat. (Heb. 10:38-39)

#### D. Shield of faith.

1. Roman shields were composed of leather or wicker.
2. The normal size was four feet high by two and a half feet wide.
3. "The word Paul uses is not that for the comparatively small round shield; it is that for the great oblong shield which the heavily armed warrior wore. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. Faith can deal with the darts of temptation. With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk close with Christ, we are safe from temptation." (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 183)
4. "Early legionary shields were oval in shape but in the 1st century they became rectangular, although curved to fit the body. A legionary shield (scutum) was made of thin sheets of wood glued together and bound round the edges with wrought iron or bronze. The center was hollowed out for the hand grip which was protected by a metal boss. The outer surface of the shield was covered with leather on which were fastened decorative bronze plates." (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39)
5. The change from small round to large rectangular shields meant the soldiers no longer needed to wear greaves (shin-pieces), and thus their mobility greatly increased.
6. Our enemy does not always attack directly. (Heb. 11:32f).

#### E. Helmet of salvation.

1. This headgear was generally of bronze, fitted inside with an iron skullcap lined with leather or cloth.
2. We are to take this helmet from God—it is our salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9)

#### F. Sword of the Spirit.

1. "The offensive armor, as described by Josephus, consisted of the *pilum* or throwing-spear, the *gladius* or Spanish sword, and the *pugio* or dagger slung on the left and right sides respectively." (H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 251)
2. "Weapons for attack included the *pilum* or javelin, two of which were carried by each man. The *pilum* was 7 ft. long, the top 3 ft. being of iron. The sword (*gladius*) was a double-edged weapon about 2 ft. long and 2 in. wide. Carried in a scabbard attached to a belt on the right-hand side of the body, it was a stabbing rather than a slashing weapon and designed for use in close fighting. The

scabbard was usually made of wood and leather held together by bronze. On the left-hand side of the body there was a dagger (*pugio*) in a bronze or iron scabbard suspended from another belt. Daggers seem to have been withdrawn from the legionary armory by the end of the 1st century.” (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39)

3. “Weapon training was most important. The intelligent use of the sword is mentioned particularly in a surviving Roman training manual. The method taught was to thrust, rather than to slash at an opponent; for a slash-cut rarely kills, but a thrust makes a deep penetration of the vital organs. The Roman short sword was clearly designed for stabbing, with its sharp angled point, though it could be, and certainly was on occasion, used to effect cutting strokes. The skulls belonging to the hapless defenders of the great Durotrigian fortress of Maiden Castle in Dorset, England, show the appalling fatal wounds inflicted by the soldiers of LEGIO II AUGUSTA against adversaries who were most probably unhelmeted.” (Michael Simkins, *Warriors Of Rome*, p. 28)
4. Our only offensive weapon is the Word of God. (Heb. 4:12)
5. Christ fought Satan in the desert with this weapon. (Matt. 4:1-11)
6. We are never wasting our time when we are sharpening our swords—do not let it get rusty.

G. The armor must be put on properly.

1. It is to be donned with prayer. (Eph. 6:18; Acts 4:29-31)
2. Pray always—pray intensely—pray for others.
3. Always remember, we are foot soldiers—God is in control.

## II. A Lesson From Rome

A. The Jewish priest and general Flavius Josephus lived during the zenith of Rome’s military glory.

1. He was made a citizen by Vespasian and traveled with the legions.
2. Roman soldiers always carried their weapons with them—even in peace.
3. “Every soldier is every day exercised, and that with great diligence, as if it were in time of war, which is the reason why they bear the fatigues of battle so easily.” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Chap. 5)
4. “This vast empire of theirs has come to them as the prize of valor, and not as a gift of fortune. For their nation does not wait for the outbreak of war to give men their first lesson in arms. They do not sit with folded hands in peace-time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise. Moreover their peace maneuvers are no less strenuous than veritable warfare. Each soldier daily throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle. No confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyzes, no fatigue exhausts them. And as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence. Indeed, it would not be wrong to describe their maneuvers as bloodless combats and their combats as sanguinary maneuvers....By their military exercises the Romans instill into their soldiers fortitude not only of body but also of soul. Fear, too, plays its

part in their training. For they have laws which punish with death not merely desertion of the ranks, but even a slight neglect of duty. And their generals are held in even greater awe than the laws....This perfect discipline makes the army an ornament of peace-time and in war welds the whole into a single body—so compact are their ranks, so alert their movements in wheeling to right or left, so quick their ears for orders, their eyes for signals, their hands to act upon them.” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Chap. 5)

5. If only we could become as familiar with our weapon. (Acts 17:11)
- B. What caused their military downfall and finally the downfall of Rome?
1. Nearly all historians agree Rome brought about its own downfall.
  2. “It is the just and important observation of Vegetius, that the infantry was invariably covered with defensive armor, from the foundation of the city to the reign of the emperor Gratian. The relaxation of discipline, and the disuse of exercise, rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armor, which they seldom wore: and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum, which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands. As the use of the shield is incompatible with that of the bow, they reluctantly marched into the field; condemned to suffer either the pain of wounds, or the ignominy of flight, and always disposed to prefer the more shameful alternative. The cavalry of the Goths, the Huns, and the Alani, had felt the benefits, and adopted the use, of defensive armor; and, as they excelled in the management of missile weapons, they easily overwhelmed the naked and trembling legions, whose heads and breasts were exposed, without defense, to the arrows of the barbarians. The loss of armies, the destruction of cities, and the dishonor of the Roman name, ineffectually solicited the successors of Gratian to restore the helmets and cuirasses of the infantry. The enervated soldiers abandoned their own, and the public defense; and the pusillanimous indolence may be considered as the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire.” (Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol.III, pp. 271-272)
- C. Is the gospel armor too heavy for you?
1. Do you “earnestly contend for the faith,” or apologize for it? (Jude 3)
  2. Our weapons are for pulling down strongholds. (2 Cor. 10:3-5)
  3. We must attack the citadels of error—not just hold our own.
  4. When General MacArthur was called home from Korea he reminded congress that “war’s very object is victory, not prolonged indecision.”
- D. Sometimes brethren need a course in enemy recognition.
1. Gun shows have trading cards from WWII that were used to identify enemy armor.
  2. Jesus declared the man who is not with Him is against Him. (Matt. 12:30)
  3. The Devil does not attack under his own banner; sometimes he advances under a flag of truce. (2 Cor. 11:14)

## Conclusion

1. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon your willingness to stand.
2. The example of Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson.
  - a. He was one of the commanders at the first battle of Bull Run.
  - b. When both right and left flanks of the confederate army fell back, Jackson's troops held firm.
  - c. General Barnard S. Bee rallied his disorganized men by saying: "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall."
  - d. This did not mean that Jackson stood there useless like a stone statue—it meant that he and his men stood firm.
  - e. The key to Gen. Jackson being able to stand: "Jackson is remembered as a great general and as an earnest and religious man. On the march he carried two books: Napoleon's 'Maxims of War' and the Bible. In the thick of battle his men often saw him move his lips in prayer." (*Compton's Encyclopedia*)
3. Christians are engaged in a great spiritual warfare.
  - a. Sometimes we think we are waging war when all we are doing is running around and making a lot of noise.
  - b. We have to take a firm stand for the truth and against the advancing enemies of truth.



# The Victory of Gideon

## Introduction

1. The story of Gideon is one of faith and courage. (Heb. 11:32-34)
2. Due to disobedience, Israel was in oppression. (Jud. 6:1-6)
  - a. Out of the 350 years between the death of Joshua until Samuel the prophet, about 100 years were spent in disloyalty to God.
  - b. The books of Judges and First Samuel present fifteen “deliverers who saved them from the hand of their enemies” (Neh. 9:27).
3. God raised up Gideon, a “mighty man of valor.” (Judges 6:11-16)

## I. Background: The Period of the Judges

- A. Time span: From the death of Joshua to the death of Samson.
  1. The period of Judges from Othniel to Samuel lasted about 350 years. (Judges 11:26)
  2. This is the period of the Theocratic regime in which God Himself is Israel’s King. (1 Sam. 8:7)
- B. Setting.
  1. The generation contemporary with Joshua was courageous, faithful, and, for the most part, free from the obstinacy and doubt which had dishonored their fathers. (Jud. 2:7) But as each tribe received its portion of the land, though, they became engrossed in establishing and cultivating it thus becoming self-centered.
  2. Living among idolaters, whom they had failed to drive out, the Israelites copied their example, intermarried with them, and became contaminated by their abominations and idolatry. (Jud. 2:10-13)
  3. The people abandoned God and became their own standard of conduct. (Jud. 17:6)
  4. The old inhabitants of the land of Canaan, left alone, gathered strength to fight against Israel.
  5. Surrounding nations such as Syria, Philistia, Moab, and Midian took advantage of Israel’s ease and began to plunder them. (Jud. 2:14-15; 3:7-8)
  6. “‘In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ (Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:25)...Each tribe took thought for itself how best to serve and maintain an adequate territory, so that separate interests of all sorts soon became prevalent, and regard for general welfare was more and more forgotten. This separation of the parts of the nation was aided by the early disunion and jealousies of the several tribes, no one of which held the preeminence...Then, too, the ancient inhabitants still retained their hold on large tracts, or on important positions throughout the country. The neighboring powers still looked upon the newcomers as an easy prey to incursion and

devastation, if not to actual subjugation. Nor did Israel escape the pernicious influence of idolatry, both of Canaan and the surrounding countries." (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 617-618)

7. "The book of Judges is one of the saddest parts of the Bible, humanly speaking. Some have called it the 'Book of Failure.' The last chapter of the preceding book, Joshua, anticipates continued blessing upon God's people in the rest land of their inheritance (Joshua 24:19-28). But one does not proceed far into the account of Judges before he senses that all is not well." (*Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 152)
8. Israel was in trouble because the people failed to:
  - a. Complete the task they were given to do—drive out the other nations.
  - b. Carry through with the lessons they learned in their reform.
    - 1) When God raised up judges to deliver them, the people only responded so far as it served their selfish ends of the moment.
    - 2) They did not sincerely love God nor did they serve Him from the heart. When things got somewhat tolerable for them again they would swiftly abandon Him and go back to their old ways.
  - c. Deal with a family, national, or community problem. They were so self-centered that they did not seek solutions to their problems until they were desperate.

#### C. A divine summary of the times. (Jud. 2:7-19)

1. During the rule of Joshua Israel served God. (7-9)
2. After the death of Joshua a generation arose who did not know the Lord nor what He had done for Israel, therefore, they did evil kindling the anger of the Lord against them. (10-14a)
3. God, therefore, delivered them to enemies who were victorious over them causing them to be greatly distressed. (14b-15)
4. God raised up judges to deliver them and they would have peace. (16)
5. When the judge would die the people would revert back to their old ways and forsake the way of God. (17-19)

#### D. The judges.

1. The judges were not judicial officials who presided over Israel's courts.
  - a. They had no civil authority but acted with spiritual authority as agents of God.
  - b. During this period the government of the people consisted of the elders having authority in their respective tribes.
2. The judges were deliverers (Judges 3:9) who were directed by the power of the Spirit of God, whom God raised up to lead Israel to freedom from the oppression of opposing nations. (Jud. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14)

## II. The Call of Gideon (Judges 6:11-24)

- A. Gideon was the son of Joash, an idolater from the family of Abiezer.

- B. His home was Ophrah. Most believe it to have been located in the western division of the tribe of Manasseh. (Jud. 6:11, 15; Josh. 17:2)
- C. He had an element of character about him that God could use so “the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, ‘The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!’” (Jud. 6:12)
- D. When he is first encountered, he is a failure in unbelief.
  - 1. He is then presented evidence designed to develop faith.
  - 2. Upon his belief, he demonstrated repentance.
  - 3. He then yielded his will to the will of God.
  - 4. He became a consecrated and devoted servant.
  - 5. He was raised by God to be a leader and savior of his people.

### III. Some Lessons on Obedience from Gideon

- A. Gideon threw down the altars of Baal. (Judges 6:25-31)
  - 1. Since idolatry was the prevailing sin in Israel, here is Gideon’s chance to display his loyalty to god and his abhorrence of idols.
  - 2. Idolatry is a constant sin in all ages.
    - a. There is no hope for some. (“Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone” — Hos. 4:17)
    - b. The symbol of idolatry had to be removed if Israel were to have hope.
  - 3. How do you define idolatry.
    - a. Something that comes between you and God. Something that takes precedence over God.
    - b. Consider the lesson of the rich, young ruler. (Mark 10:17-22)
- B. Sifting for service in Gideon’s army. (Jud. 7:1-8)
  - 1. Gideon’s army consisted of 32,000 men. (1-3)
  - 2. “Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were...as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.” (12)
  - 3. The first test, the “fearful and afraid” were let go. (cf. Deut. 20:8)
    - a. Fear is contagious; a lack of discipline harms all.
    - b. Fear is the opposite of faith.
    - c. We often want to avoid danger. (Matt. 10:34-39)
    - d. About 10,000 men remained but God once more declared that the army was too large. (4)
  - 4. The water test—only 300 qualified. (4-8)
    - a. In Israel, there is a small national park at the foot of Mt. Gilboa.
      - 1) An attractive area with green grass and huge eucalyptus trees and a big swimming pool fed by a small spring.
      - 2) Here, almost 32 centuries ago, Gideon gathered the Israelites together for a battle against the Midianite invaders.

- 3) This spring has often seen the clash of armies.
  - aa. It was here, in 1260, that the Mamluks stopped the invasion of the previously invincible Mongols.
  - bb. In the 1930's the woods above the spring hid the training of illegal Jewish self-defense squads by the British army - among them was Moshe Dayan.

- b. Though under pangs of thirst, only 300 of Gideon's men exhibit caution and self-control.
- c. Most were careless in the presence of the enemy. Are we?
- d. How do we talk about the church while at work?
- e. In the final end it had become "strength through subtraction."

#### C. The Victory Of Faith.

1. No weapons were used - no worldly methods. (Jud. 7:12,16-22)
  - a. This delivered them from the delusion that they won the battle by their own power and might.
  - b. The strength of the church is not in numbers or schemes.
  - c. Some brethren want to imitate the world around us.
  - d. Appeal to the carnal man and that is what you will get.
2. The reason for their success was found in three parts:
  - a. *Unity*. They heard only the voice of their captain.
  - b. *Obedience*. They followed the example of Gideon.
  - c. *Faithfulness*. "Every man stood in his own place."
3. United in the battle cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."
  - a. Our sword today is God's word. (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16)
  - b. The word is all-sufficient and always victorious. (Isa. 55:11)

#### **Conclusion**

1. Enlist in God's army today!
2. Do not fear for faith in God's word will bring victory over sin and death.

# The Courageous Victory of David

## I. The Necessity of Courage

- A. Courage is essential for a soldier in battle and for the soldier of Christ in the fight of faith. (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7-8)
  - 1. Courage is the strength of the soul.
    - a. Spiritual strength includes steadfastness, bravery, faith and honesty.
    - b. Such does not come by accident but is deliberately developed.
  - 2. God has no use for cowards. (Heb. 10:38-39)
- B. Courage is needed because God:
  - 1. Commands it. (Josh. 1:9; Phil. 1:27-28; Heb. 10:35-39)
  - 2. Pledges His support. (Josh. 1:9; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Phil. 4:13)
  - 3. Gives assurance of success. (Josh. 1:8; Isa. 4:10-11; Rev. 2:10; 3:21)
- C. Christians' lives must be built on a foundation of courage.
  - 1. Two components of courage.
    - a. A good conscience—knowing you have obeyed God. (Heb. 10:22-24)
      - 1) God knows every thought and motive, therefore, the Christian must be sincere.
      - 2) One cannot have real courage unless he knows he is doing right. (Prov. 28:1)
    - b. Trust in God.
      - 1) You must believe that He will be with you. (Rom. 8:31-39)
      - 2) God must be put first and foremost in your life. (Prov. 29:25)
  - 2. Both of the above components come with study of God's word. One must study to:
    - a. Build faith and to understand how to obey the Lord.
    - b. Learn more of God and to develop a greater appreciation for and trust in Him.

## II. Sources of Courage

- A. God.
  - 1. The Father (1 Sam. 30:6); Son (John 16:33); and Holy Spirit in His revelation (Rom. 15:4-5).
  - 2. If God is for us, who can be against us. (Rom. 8:31ff.)
- B. Prayer.
  - 1. Help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)
  - 2. Boldness in preaching the gospel. (Eph. 6:19-20)
- C. Association with brethren.
  - 1. Hebrews 10:24-25. Christians are to "encourage" one another.
    - a. "Encourage:" To inspire with courage, hope and spirit.
    - b. Faithful attendance to services of study and worship revives the soul.

2. Hebrews 3:13. Christians are to exhort, encourage, one another daily. Such encouragement is:
  - a. To be given continually.
  - b. Preventative - "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Christians are to encourage one another, build one another up.
  - a. Too often, the opposite is true—some tear down others or watch others be ridiculed and never say a word in defense.
  - b. Christians are a source of encouragement in time of need. (Acts 28:15)

### III. Areas in Which One Needs Courage: Some Biblical Examples of Courage

- A. When in the minority: Noah. (Gen. 6:8; 7:1)
  1. It is easy to renounce a position when you are in the minority.
  2. God's people have always seemed to be in the minority.
    - a. Elijah. (1 Kings 18)
    - b. The apostle Paul. (2 Tim. 4:16)
    - c. Today it is the same. (Luke 13:23-24; Matt. 7:13-14)
  3. God expects His children to stand for right even when they are in the minority. (2 Cor. 6:17-18)
- B. In the face of civil government: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. (Dan. 3:16-18)
  1. They would not even pretend to worship the idol.
  2. They overcame with God's help. (Dan. 3:43-45, 50)
  3. Christians today must face up to civil government.
    - a. In our country we may have to be doing it more and more.
    - b. How can you know if you could stand the test? See if your courage gives out in lesser situations such as with family, at work, etc.
- C. Facing temptation: Joseph. (Gen. 39:6-12)
  1. He could have sinned with Potiphar's wife and no one would have known—except God.
  2. Though his livelihood in a strange country was at stake, he overcame with God's help. (Gen. 41:39-44)
  3. Christians are to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7) but it takes courage. Such courage comes from a knowledge of God's care. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- D. Rebuking sinners and teaching truth: Nathan. (2 Sam. 12)
  1. It is much easier to overlook and forget the sins of others but that is not what is best for either party.
  2. Nathan could have suffered greatly, even losing his life, but he taught plainly, convictingly and fearlessly.
  3. Other examples of courage in teaching and rebuking others:
    - a. Ezekiel. (Ezek. 3:1-11)
      - 1) He knew the people would not want to hear the message of God.
      - 2) God told him, "Tell them...whether they hear or whether they refuse."

- b. John the Baptist. (Mark 6:18)
- c. The apostle Paul to Peter. (Gal. 2:11)
- E. Worshiping God: Daniel. (Dan. 6)
  - 1. As one of the three princes under the king, he was impeccably honest. (3-5)
  - 2. He openly served God knowing he was risking his position and his life. (10)
    - a. He would not compromise his service to God for any reason.
    - b. He overcame through God. (16, 22)
- F. Admitting wrong: David. (2 Sam. 12:13)
  - 1. Sometimes this takes more courage than anything else for the cowardly way is to try to justify one's wrongs.
  - 2. Nothing short of the kind of courage David possessed will suffice for the Christian.

#### IV. David's Great Example of Courage: His Victory Over Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-51)

- A. The Philistines had gathered their armies against the Israelites.
  - 1. Their champion, Goliath, a ferocious warrior, defied the entire army of Israel.
  - 2. The Israelites were delivered by David who, in a great act of courage, willingly engaged Goliath in battle.
- B. This account has come under suspicion by many who do not believe the Bible.
  - 1. Newspaper article, "Goliath's secret out! He was a weakling" (Reprint from *Dayton Daily News*)
  - 2. Goliath was a worthy adversary. (1 Sam. 17)
    - a. He is referred to as "champion" three times. (4, 23, 51).
    - b. He was 9 feet, 6 inches tall and wore armor that weighed at least 150 pounds. (5, 6)
    - c. His spear head weighed 18 pounds. (7)
    - d. He proposed a "winner-take-all" fight. (16)
    - e. His appeal made Israel "greatly afraid." (11, 24)
    - f. He had a high price on his head. (25)
    - g. Saul, a great warrior in his own right, urged David not to fight him. (33)
    - h. He was as the lion and bear David had fought. (34-37)
    - i. His eyesight was not poor. It was good enough for him to see that David was a "youth." (42)
    - j. He was a giant, ferocious warrior who defied an entire army.

#### ***Goliath's secret out! He was a weakling***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Goliath was a sickly giant weakened by glandular problems and probably didn't notice David hurling the fatal pebble at his head, researchers theorize.

Dr. Pauline Rabin, a psychiatrist, and her husband, Dr. David Rabin, an endocrinologist, both of Vanderbilt University, claim there is evidence in the *Bible* that Goliath might have suffered from a combination of ailments which made him physically vulnerable to the small rocks David loaded into his slingshot.

"There is considerable evidence in the *Bible* especially in Samuel, that Goliath didn't take much notice of David. He was disdainful of the small, slight David and took no notice when he picked up the stones," Mrs. Rabin said Wednesday.

"**HE DIDN'T DUCK** or raise his shield and consequently, David apparently had little trouble striking him with the stone," she said.

The two say Goliath suffered from gigantism and possibly a rare disorder called endocrine neoplasia, which causes tumors to grow in the endocrine gland.

"It would explain why Goliath was so large, why he couldn't really see David and why he was felled by a small rock from a slingshot," Mrs. Rabin said.

She said one reason Goliath probably took little notice of David was because the disease had put pressure on his optic nerve, resulting in diminished vision.

"He could see but it was sort of like a horse wearing blinders. He had to turn his whole head. He also probably had a bone defect in the skull and probably had a lot of cysts," the psychologist said. (Reprint from *Dayton Daily News*)

- C. The source of David's courage: "The battle is the Lord's."
1. David's courage was not because of:
    - a. His personal size or strength.
    - b. His military armament. Saul tried to put his armor on David but he refused to wear it because he had not "proved" it.
    - c. Numbers or the support of others.
  2. David's courage was founded upon his great faith in God.
    - a. He knew that God was with him.
    - b. He knew "the battle is the Lord's." (1 Sam. 17:47)
    - c. He knew "the Lord does not save with sword and spear." God has given victory in some most unusual ways.
      - 1) The victory over Jericho. (Josh. 6; Heb. 11:30)
      - 2) Gideon's victory over the Midianites. (Jud. 7)
- D. "The battle is the Lord's" today.
1. There is a need for people of deep faith and courage who will go out against the "giants" of today.
  2. The "giants" of today include:
    - a. Worldliness.
    - b. Compromise.
    - c. Indifference.
    - d. Lack of growth.
  3. All of these "giants," and more, can be conquered if we will have the same faith and courage of David.



# The Victory of Elijah

## I. Elijah

### A. Background information.

1. Name: "Jah is God," "my God is Jehovah."
2. He was a native of Tishbeh in the territory of Naphtali. (1 Kings 17:1)
3. His physical appearance was that of a hairy man dressed in a leather girdle. (2 Kings 1:8)
4. He prophesied mostly during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. (876-854 B.C.)
5. His ruling passion was jealousy for Jehovah. (1 Kings 19:10,14)
6. He was the type of John the Baptist. (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:11-13; Mark 9:11-13)
7. He appeared with Jesus and Moses at the transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-5)

### B. A summary of Elijah's life.

1. He prophesied a drought. (1 Kings 17:1) It lasted 3½ years. (1 Kings 18:1, 41-46; Luke 4:25; Jas. 5:17)
2. He was fed by ravens at the brook Cherith. (1 Kings 17:2-7) The brook Cherith was east of the Jordan River.
3. He was sustained by the widow of Zarephath. (1 Kings 17:8-16)
  - a. Zarephath was on the seacoast of Phoenicia between Tyre and Sidon.
  - b. Her meal and oil did not run out.
4. He restored the life of the widow of Zarephath's son. (1 Kings 17:17-24) She thought his death was by a judgment on her sins because of the presence of the prophet.
5. He challenged and defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. (1 Kings 18:1-40) There were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah.
6. The drought he had prophesied ended in the third year. (1 Kings 18:1, 41-46)
7. He fled from the wrath of Jezebel, wife of Ahab, queen of Israel. (1 Kings 19:1-14)
8. He was instructed by God to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel (841-814 B.C.), and Elisha to be prophet. (1 Kings 19:15-18)
9. He cast his mantle on Elisha. (1 Kings 19:19-21)
10. He prophesied against the house of Ahab for the death of Naboth. (1 Kings 21:17-19)
11. He prophesied the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel (853-852 B.C.), son of Ahab. (2 Kings 1:2-16)
12. He warned Jehoram, king of Judah (848-841 B.C.), of an impending plague upon his family and possessions and foretold of his death. (2 Chron. 21:12-15,18-19)
13. He ascended to heaven in a whirlwind, passing his mantle to Elisha. (2 Kings 2:1-18)

## II. The Worship of Baal

- A. Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanite nations. Ashtoreth was their supreme female deity.

B. The prevalence of Baal worship.

1. The worship of Baal prevailed in the time of Moses among the Moabites and Midianites. (Num. 22:41) It was through them that it first spread to the Israelites. (Num. 25:3-18)
2. It was reintroduced to Israel during the reign of Ahab (874-853 B.C.) because of the influence of his wife, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. (1 Kings 16:31)
  - a. It became the religion of the court and the people of the ten tribes (1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:19,22) and appears never to have been permanently abolished from among them.
  - b. Temples were erected to him, even in Judah (1 Kings 16:32) and he was worshiped with much ceremony. (1 Kings 18:19,26-28; 2 Kings 10:22)
3. The attractiveness of it to the Jews undoubtedly grew out of its licentious character.

C. The nature of Baal worship.

1. "The emphasis of Baalism was on psychophysical relatedness and subjective experience. The gulf between man and God was leveled out of existence by means of participatory rites. The terrifying majesty of God, His 'otherness' was assimilated to the religious passions of the worshiper. The god of the bull image, the god of wine, the god of the fertility figurine, was the god of relevance, fulfilling personal needs with convincing immediacy. The desires that inflame the soul were fulfilled in the cultic act of worship. The transcendence of the deity was overcome in the ecstasy of feeling." (E.H. Peterson, *Theology Today*, Vol. XXIX, July 1972)
2. The prophets accused the people of harlotry. (Jud. 8:33; 1 Chron. 5:25; 2 Chron. 21:13; etc.)
  - a. Such had a literal reference to the "sacred prostitution" of the worship of Baal.
  - b. It had an application to the entire rationale of their worship.
    - 1) Harlotry: worship that sought fulfillment through self-satisfaction, worship which was shaped and formed by the personal needs, desires and passions of the worshiper.
    - 2) It is worship which says, "I will satisfy you...you want a religious 'experience?' I will give it to you...Do you desire you needs to be fulfilled? I will do it and in the most alluring fashion possible."

D. The will of God sets itself firmly in opposition to the tastes, preoccupations and idiosyncrasies of men and is conveniently discarded by Baalistic worship.

1. In Baalism:
  - a. Worship is stripped to the personal desires of the worshiper.
  - b. Its rule is that worship must be interesting, exciting and "relevant."

2. In the worship of God:
  - a. Nothing is ever done simply for the sake of the “religious experience” involved.
  - b. No act of worship was ever authorized simply to allow someone to “feel good” about it alone.
3. “The distinction between the worship of Baal and the worship of Yahweh (Jehovah) is a distinction between approaching the will of the covenant God which could be understood and known and obeyed, and the blind life-force in nature which could only be felt, absorbed, and imitated.” (Peterson, 141)

### III. The Contest on Mt. Carmel Between Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:1-40)

- A. It was occasioned by Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel.
  1. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians.
  2. She instituted the persecution of Jehovah-worship and introduced the worship of Baal. (1 Kings 18:4, 13)
- B. Elijah was raised up by God.
  1. “Coming forth suddenly from the wilds of Gilead, he announced himself to Ahab. Austere and ascetic, he brought with him the strong monotheistic spirit of the desert...He came to save his country from a mixture of Baal and Jehovah-worship.” (George L. Robinson, *Leaders of Israel*, p. 161)
  2. His message to Ahab: Jehovah is a jealous God who demands the worship of His people.
  3. He prophesied three years of drought and famine.
- C. He demanded a contest between Jehovah and Baal.
  1. The contest at Mt. Carmel was the result. (1 Kings 18:1-40)
  2. It was an apparent victory for the people shouted, “Jehovah, he is God.” (1 Kings 18:39)

### IV. An Application for Today

- A. We might suppose that we are far removed from idolatrous worship but we would be mistaken.
  1. Baalism did not die with the demise of the Canaanite civilization.
  2. Baalism resurfaces every time a new “Ahab” seeks to rectify the “emotionless, irrelevant and liturgical service” of “stale congregations” with new “relevant and meaningful innovations.”
- B. There appears to be a certain subjectivism creeping in among brethren which elevates selfish “needs” and prideful “entertainment” above the response of a thankful heart to God.
- C. Our worship can become, rather than a meaningful response to the true God, a show or performance which derives its motivation from will-worship. (Col. 2:18)
  1. Worship of this sort is a thinly disguised cover for self-seeking.

2. The participants in such worship may be entertained by, excited about or ecstatic over such worship but there is considerable doubt that such can be edifying to the whole church or pleasing to God.

### **Conclusion**

1. We must examine our motivation and objective in worship. We must be sure that we are worshiping God and not self.
2. Elijah's challenge in 1 Kings 18:21 remains relevant today.

# The Victory in Jesus

“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 12:11**

## Introduction

1. The Greek word *nikao* which is translated “overcame” is used 17 times in the book of Revelation.
  - a. The word literally means “to gain the victory, to prevail, to conquer.”
  - b. In the text, it “...is used of one who by Christian constancy and courage keeps himself unharmed and spotless from his adversary’s devices, solicitations, assaults...” (Thayer, 426)
2. The idea of overcoming depicts the keynote of the book.
  - a. The kingdom of God has to be tested as the Christ was.
  - b. As Jesus was victorious in resurrection, so is the church in the book of Revelation.
3. The theme of the book of Revelation.
  - a. The theme is conflict between God and Satan in the conflict between the church and the forces of Rome.
  - b. This theme is stated in 17:14: “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful.”

## I. Revelation Is a Message to God’s People of Certain Victory

- A. It was written during a period of severe persecution.
  1. The date of writing seems best to fit around 96 A.D. when Domitian (ca. 81-96 A.D.) was emperor.
    - a. Some suggestions for refusing the early date during the time of Nero, ca. 68 A.D.
      - 1) There is no solid evidence that Nero’s persecution extended beyond Rome.
      - 2) Nero’s persecution was not really a religious one but rather Christians were his scapegoat for the fire of Rome.
    - b. Some evidence for the time of Domitian.
      - 1) He has gone down in history as one who bathed his empire in the blood of Christians.
      - 2) He raised himself above all other gods and enforced emperor worship.

- 3) The church was obviously in opposition to him for when given the choice of bowing to “Lord Caesar” or “Lord Jesus” the saints would only bow to Christ.
  - 4) The forms of persecution were many: Some were put to death, some exiled, some tortured, some had their property confiscated. (Rev. 1:9; 13:15-17)
2. To fully appreciate the message of the book of Revelation, one must:
    - a. Remember that Rome was the capital of the world and that Domitian had the political power of Rome behind him.
    - b. Realize that no more mighty a power could be employed to crush the church than Rome.
    - c. Acknowledge there has never since been a situation equal to that time—a period when it looked as though the whole world was against the Lord and His people.
- B. The apocalyptic style, symbolic imagery, revealed and concealed.
1. Many people avoid the book of Revelation because of its symbolism
    - a. Though often misunderstood and neglected, it is a message that is needed for every generation, including our generation.
    - b. The name itself indicates it was meant to be understood.
    - c. The fact that it is inspired of God and preserved proves it to be worthy of our study.
    - d. Though we may have difficulty with some specific signs along the way, the general message of the book can be clearly seen unfolding one of the most inspiring messages of courage and hope revealed in the Bible.
  2. This type of literature was common in Hebrew history.
    - a. It was especially popular from ca. 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.
    - b. The books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah use it extensively.
    - c. It was common during the troublesome periods of suffering, sorrow, near despair and times of some great national crisis.
  3. By using this style, the message of victory was revealed to those who received it and understood this type of symbolism.
    - a. At the same time, the message was concealed from the heathen enemy who may confiscate the scroll on which it was written.
    - b. “He was likely to think, ‘a fool’s message in the hand of a fool,’ and then release both the bearer and the scroll.” (Robert Harkrider, Sermon at 77<sup>th</sup> St. Lectures, Birmingham, Alabama, August 10, 1981)
- C. Its interpretation today should have meaning to first century Christians.
1. It was written primarily for the encouragement and edification of Christians during the first and second centuries.
    - a. The view commonly held by millennialists and dispensationalists who consider that the book of Revelation is unfulfilled prophecies about the future make the book of little or no value to those who needed it most.

- b. The millennialists and dispensationalists' view is inconsistent with the time element stated in the book.
  - 1) "The time is near." (1:3)
  - 2) "The time is at hand." (22:10)
  - 3) "Things which must shortly take place." (1:1; 22:6)
  - 4) "I am coming quickly." (22:7, 12, 20)
- 2. We should appeal to the book of Revelation in the same manner as we would, for example, to the book of First Corinthians.
  - a. Its primary lesson was to correct errors in the day it was penned but its truths are valuable for all ages.
  - b. It met a need at the time of its writing as it dealt with a historical situation but its message is applicable to all time as similar situations arise.
- 3. The message of the book of Revelation is "living and active." (Heb. 4:12)
  - a. The kingdom of God and His truth will triumph.
  - b. Satan is destined to complete destruction and with him falls his cause.

## II. Worthy Is the Lamb

A. The sovereignty of God is depicted in the throne scene in chapter four of Revelation.

- 1. The description of God's throne. (1-6)
  - a. The apostle John was beckoned to come see and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he saw this vision of the throne of God.
  - b. The Lord God Almighty sat on the throne surrounded by four living creatures, twenty-four elders and the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Around the throne was a rainbow and out of the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings and voices (as a sign of God's omnipotent power) and before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal.
- 2. The four living creatures say, "Holy, Holy, Holy." (7-8)
  - a. These seem comparable to the seraphim of Isaiah 6:1-6.
    - 1) "Seraphim (burning, glowing), an order of celestial beings, whom Isaiah beheld in vision standing above Jehovah as he sat upon his throne. Isa. 6:2. They are described as having each of them three pairs of wings, with one of which they covered their faces (a token of humility); with the second they covered their feet (a token of respect); while with the third they flew. They seem to have borne a general resemblance to the human figure, ver. 6. Their occupation was twofold—to celebrate the praises of Jehovah's holiness and power, ver. 3, and to act as the medium of communication between heaven and earth. ver. 6" (Smith's Bible Dictionary, 606).
    - 2) "Seraphim, a plural word occurring only in Isa 6:2 ff—Isaiah's vision of Yahweh. The origin of the term in Hebrew is uncertain.... These seraphim are august beings whose forms are not at all fully

described. They had faces, feet, hands and wings. The six wings, in three pairs, covered their faces and feet in humility and reverence, and were used for sustaining them in their positions about the throne of Yahweh. One of them is the agent for burning (with a coal off the altar, not with his own power or person) the sin from the lips of the prophet.

Seraphim are in Jewish theology connected with cherubim and ophanim as the three highest orders of attendants on Yahweh, and are superior to the angels who are messengers sent on various errands. As the cherubim in popular fancy were represented by the storm-clouds, so the seraphim were by the serpentine flashes of the lightning; but none of this appears in Isaiah's vision.

In the New Testament the only possible equivalent is in 'the living ones' ('beasts' of the King James Version) in Rev 4-5, etc. Here, as in Isaiah, they appear nearest Yahweh's throne, supreme in praise of His holiness." (*I.S.B.E.*, 2732)

- b. Notice they sing of God's:
  - 1) Absolute holiness ("Holy, Holy, Holy").
  - 2) Sovereignty ("Lord, God Almighty").
  - 3) Eternal nature ("Who was and is and is to come").
3. The twenty-four elders (the redeemed of both the OT and NT) join in a song of creation. (9-11)
  - a. Those closest to God should know best and these are pictured as singing His praise.
  - b. If the greatest representing God's covenant people, combined with the highest order of angels, bow down and worship the Father, shouldn't we? God is sovereign, not Domitian.
- B. The Redeeming Lamb is praised by the angels in chapter five.
  1. "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" (2)
    - a. John saw a book in the right hand of God.
      - 1) This represents God's plan with respect to the destiny of man.
      - 2) To break the seven seals meant not only to reveal but also to carry out the plan of God.
    - b. John wept because no one was worthy to open the book (4) for if left closed, mankind would be without hope.
  2. "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seal." (5)
    - a. This figure is from Genesis 49:8-10.
    - b. Thinking he would see a lion, John turned and saw "a Lamb as though it had been slain..." (6)



- c. He overcame by offering Himself as a sacrifice manifesting the characteristics of both lion and lamb in His suffering and death.
- 3. The song of redemption is sung by the twenty-four elders. (8-10)
  - a. Christ is worthy because the eternal purpose of God was purposed and perfected in Him.
  - b. The book (scroll) is God's scheme of redemption, His eternal purpose, His plan of salvation.
  - c. God's purpose could now be completely revealed to man "in the beloved." (Eph. 1:3-14)
- 4. The chorus of heaven gives praise. (11-14)
  - a. Joining in are the voices of many angels, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders.
    - 1) Altogether they number 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands. (Dan. 7:10)
    - 2) All are saying, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing." (12) [A seven-fold ascription of praise]
  - b. All the universe join in praise to both the Father and the Lamb: "Blessing and honor and glory and power." (13) [A four-fold ascription of praise—four is the creation number]
  - c. "Amen" from the four living creatures and the elders who fall down and worship.
- 5. Such is the scene of heaven.
  - a. The church on earth need not fear no matter how many tribulations they must face for the Creator controls the universe and His Redeemer has "all authority." (Matt. 28:18)
  - b. Those who follow the Redeemer will never pass beyond the love and care of God.

### **III. They Overcame Him By the Blood of the Lamb – Revelation 12:11**

- A. Victory over Satan is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus.
  - 1. The first century Christians were men and women just like we are—they had weaknesses, sorrows and disappointments and were sinners just like us—but they had been made kings and priests and they reigned (Rev. 5:10).
    - a. The question is "How?"
    - b. The answer is by the blood of the Lamb.
- B. The cleansing blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10).
  - 1. Only those who obey are cleansed by His blood.
  - 2. Consider the teachings of 1 Peter 1:18-19, 22-23 on redemption and Romans 6:3-5 on baptism. Baptism is the means by which His blood is applied to the sinner.

- a. The effects of His blood:
  - 1) Wash away sins. (Rev. 1:5)
  - 2) Remission of sins. (Matt. 26:28)
- b. The effects of baptism:
  - 1) Wash away sins. (Acts 22:16)
  - 2) Remission of sins. (Acts 2:38)
- 3. As we walk in the light there is continued cleansing. (1 John 1:7)

### **Conclusion**

1. Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb?
2. If not, the message of Revelation is one of fear for you for “anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:15)
3. Those who are in Christ, though, have every reason to take confidence for in Christ is victory over sin and death.



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