

Lenten I  
Feb. 17, 2013  
Rev. 12:9-12

In Christ Jesus, our Victorious Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

During these six weeks of Lent in our mid-week services we listen to our Savior's **PASSION HISTORY** about the greatest suffering, anguish, torment, grief and pain ever known to mankind. This past Wednesday we heard of Jesus in such agony as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

If that is true, then why is our Sunday Lenten series this year entitled: **THE REVELATION OF OUR TRIUMPHANT SAVIOR**? Aren't these two terms **TRIUMPH** and **SUFFERING** opposites? How does anguish, pain, torment, death and damnation fit in with triumph? That's what we will be discussing during our Sunday Lenten services this year as we look into the book of Revelation and see our **TRIUMPHANT SAVIOR** at work.

Sometimes we Christians get the feeling that we are losers. That everything we try fails, that we are somehow cursed to fail because we live in a world of sin. That we are doomed to fall into sin and Satan's temptations. We look at the world and we see others who have success, who seem to have few problems in life, who seem to have it all, prosperity, happiness, good health and a wonderful family. But not us. If there's a bad break, it'll come our way; if there's illness we're sure to catch it. What do they call that, Murphy's Law? Christians can sometimes become the most pessimistic of people. And really that's shocking! For of all people, Christians should be the most optimistic, confident, content, joy-filled and happy. Why?

Because of our **TRIUMPHANT SAVIOR**. Then, why aren't we? Because of the Great Dragon!

Our first theme is entitled:

### **JESUS, THE DRAGON SLAYER.**

In the book of Revelation we are introduced to a dragon, a fiery, red dragon who had 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns on his heads. This is not a fairy tale dragon, or a make believe friendly dragon, nor is this a mythological fire breathing dragon. This dragon is **REAL**. Real in the sense that he exists. Who is this dragon? Let's see what our text says in verse 9. **SO THE GREAT DRAGON WAS CAST OUT, THAT SERPENT OF OLD, CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN, WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; HE WAS CAST TO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE CAST OUT WITH HIM.**

vs. 9: **SO THE GREAT DRAGON WAS CAST OUT, THAT SERPENT OF OLD:** This points us back to the Garden of Eden to the serpent who tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. Who was that serpent?

vs. 9: **CALLED THE DEVIL:** The name devil means **SLANDERER**. He is the one who spreads lies. In fact Scripture calls him "the father of lies." He made up the first lie telling Eve she would not surely die if she ate of the fruit when God had clearly said she would die. He spreads lies especially about God and His Word.

vs. 9: **WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD:** We also see that this dragon is a deceiver. That is, someone who leads someone else astray. We see how he deceived Eve into believing that God was withholding some great thing from her in the garden. He deceived her into believing that he was looking out for her interest and welfare. He deceived her into believing that it would be good for her to eat the fruit, even though it was contrary to what God had said. He was deceiving her into believing it was better for her to have her will be done rather than God's will to be done. And he continues to deceive the whole world to this very day and will continue to do so until the Judgment. His two greatest weapons are **LIES and DECEIT**.

vs. 9: **AND SATAN:** The name Satan means adversary, enemy, also accuser. Satan is not man's friend, no matter how loving and caring he may make himself appear. He is the enemy of both God and us. As the great accuser, Satan first of all leads us into sin through his lies and deceit. Then, when we are caught in the trap of sin, Satan accuses us, points out our sin to God and insists that we be eternally punished for it.

Like Rumpelstiltskin, who danced for glee around his bonfire, sure that the farmer's daughter would not know his name and therefore he would get her child; so also Satan, no doubt, was filled with

ecstasy and thrilled when God called Adam and Eve out from behind the trees and confronted them with their sins. He fully expected God to fulfill His justice and damn His created humans to the eternal torments of hell where they would live forever with him.

What a shock it was to Rumpelstiltskin when the girl knew his name. What a shock it must have been to Satan when God turned away from Adam and Eve and said to him, **I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN YOUR SEED AND HER SEED; HE SHALL BRUISE YOUR HEAD, AND YOU SHALL BRUISE HIS HEAL.**

In these words God was not only prophesying of hatred between Satan and Eve and an endless warfare between Satan's children (the unbelievers in the world) and the believers, but here the LORD God is prophesying of Satan's ultimate defeat at the hands of the Savior, the Woman's Seed.

That enmity, that hatred and warfare has been ongoing ever since. Satan, like the roaring lion that he is, has spiritually devoured millions upon millions of victims and would have had all of mankind in his control, if the Champion of sinners had not come. Jesus had His heel bruised, that cost Him His life, but Satan's authority over man was crushed when Jesus rose again thereby destroying sin's curse, which was death. Satan has been defeated and mankind has been set free from Satan's control and from eternal damnation.

Satan knew that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was the Promised One of Genesis 3:15; the Woman's Promised Seed. Already at His birth Satan tried to destroy Jesus with Herod's deceptive plot to get the Wise Men to tell him where Jesus lived so he could kill Him. Again and again Satan was on the offensive against Christ, launching repeated attacks: the temptation in the wilderness as we heard in our Gospel reading; the many cases of demon possession which Jesus encountered; the insistence by Peter, one of His own disciples, that Jesus should not suffer and die; the hatred of the religious leaders; the Lord's almost overwhelming realization of the tremendous suffering He would have to endure, as evidenced by His sweat and agonizing prayer in Gethsemane; the betrayal by Judas, another of His disciples; the fleeing of His disciples in the Garden when humanly speaking He needed them the most; the denial by one of His closest disciples, Peter. All of these were Satan's attempts at defeating Jesus.

The climax of the great warfare between Jesus and Satan was during Christ's Passion. We heard on Wednesday that in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus' enemies came out to arrest Him, He said, **BUT THIS IS YOUR HOUR, AND THE POWER OF DARKNESS.** Yes, it appeared that once again Satan was on the offensive, was gaining the advantage, winning the battle. All of His disciples scattered with fear; looking helpless Jesus was arrested; He was led to the Sanhedrin; convicted of blasphemy and cruelly mistreated; He was taken to Pilate; was unjustly condemned to die; and led out to be crucified. Yet what does our text say? **SO THE GREAT DRAGON WAS CAST OUT.**

Satan was cast out of power, he was defeated, he was crushed, not Christ. By Jesus willingly giving His life as a sacrifice, by His shedding His blood as a payment, He did not lose but **WON!** He said concerning His upcoming death; **NOW IS THE JUDGMENT OF THIS WORLD; NOW THE RULER OF THIS WORLD WILL BE CAST OUT. AND I, IF I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL PEOPLES TO MYSELF.**

Paul writes, **HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES, HAVING WIPED OUT THE HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS THAT WAS AGAINST US, WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO US. AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS. HAVING DISARMED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, HE MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF THEM, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM IN IT.**

The Great Dragon has lost his power to accuse mankind of their sins because of the **BLOOD OF THE LAMB.** The **BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON, CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.** Because of that shed blood, because the Son of God died to pay the wages of sin in place of all of mankind, the devil can no longer accuse us before the throne in heaven. He is cast out! What a marvelous statement the author to the Hebrews makes when he writes about Jesus, **HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE SHARED IN FLESH AND BLOOD, THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT DESTROY HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL, AND RELEASE THOSE WHO THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH WERE ALL THEIR LIFETIME SUBJECT TO BONDAGE.**

But what about now? This great battle was waged almost 2,000 years ago. Satan was defeated, cast out of power, cast out of the presence of God no longer able to accuse us of our sins. But Satan is still around, he is still a powerful, roaring lion, still walking about searching for victims to devour.

Our text tells us that the Great Dragon is powerless before the **WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY.**

This is none other than the Gospel message. The Good News that we have all been called upon by Jesus to proclaim to all the world: **GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.** We have full and free forgiveness through Christ's shed blood.

Oh, yes the Great Dragon is still very powerful. We can see that clearly in our day and age and even in our very own lives. But against the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he is powerless. He has been chained, his authority, his rule over us has been crushed and taken away. The Lord through Paul tells us, **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS** and again he writes, **WHO SHALL BRING A CHARGE AGAINST GOD'S ELECT? IT IS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES. 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.**

Verses 10-11 of our text are really a song of praise and thanksgiving. **THEN I HEARD A LOUD VOICE SAYING IN HEAVEN, NOW SALVATION, AND STRENGTH, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD, AND THE POWER OF HIS CHRIST HAVE COME, FOR THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN, WHO ACCUSED THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT, HAS BEEN CAST DOWN. 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. THEREFORE REJOICE, O HEAVENS, AND YOU WHO DWELL IN THEM!**

On account of Jesus' gift of redemption we stand before God justified and forgiven of our sins. When Satan tries to accuse us of our sins before God, God looks at us and sees **PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS**, not our own, but Christ's which He has earned for us and which is ours through faith.

Our text ends with a word of warning. **WOE TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH AND THE SEA! FOR THE DEVIL HAS COME DOWN TO YOU, HAVING GREAT WRATH, BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT HE HAS A SHORT TIME.**

Satan is prowling around on this earth with great wrath, anger, hatred for God, and for you and me. Satan knows that the end is near, that there are not many days left. He knows that God's final and ultimate judgment upon him is soon, that man's deliverance from this vale of tears is at hand and he is more active then ever. Satan never rests!

But it is not Satan who is to be on the offensive because the end is near, it is the Word of God and His children. We should be on the offensive. Seventy disciples were sent out by Christ during His ministry and they received a foretaste of the victory over Satan when by the power of Jesus they were able to cast out demons and declare sins forgiven. Jesus said at that time, **I SAW SATAN FALL LIKE LIGHTENING FROM HEAVEN.**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has spread from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria, throughout Asia, to Europe and the Americas and Africa and all around the world. **THE GATES OF HELL CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST THE CHURCH (ALL BELIEVERS).** That is not a defensive statement, it is offensive. Gates don't attack, they defend. The gates of hell cannot withstand the onslaught of the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ. We're on the attack, not Satan! We're on the offensive! Or are we? We should be!

Whenever we speak to our children about God's love in Christ Jesus, whenever we forgive them for their sins and through the Gospel encourage them and empower them to live for Christ, the Church of God is on the offensive. Whenever we speak of Christ crucified and risen again to lost souls, Satan is being crushed, his authority, his rule over unbelieving hearts is being destroyed. Whenever we have adult Bible instructions and people are led by the Holy Spirit to see their sins, repent of them and turn alone to Jesus we see the offensive nature of the Gospel taking over more and more of Satan's domain. Satan is powerless before the WORD. He cannot stop it! Luther put it this way, **ONE LITTLE WORD CAN FELL HIM!**

In these last days, may we not shrink away from the battle, but be in the forefront, leading the way boldly, bravely attacking the **GATES OF HELL** themselves with the powerful Word of God. For Satan has been defeated, by the Great Dragon slayer, Jesus Christ.

Ours is the **VICTORY!**

Amen.

