

# A Mighty Fortress

By Paris Reidhead\*

Will turn to number 33. I am asking you sing in just a monument this great hymn by Martin Luther<sup>1</sup>. You'll notice the message this evening is the title of the song and as we study Revelation Chapter 12. Shorty, I'm sure you'll understand why I felt led to choose this song. But I would call to your attention particularly the second and third stanzas notice them as I read them:

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabbath, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

It is finished we saw this morning. He has won. Then notice the victory of Luther's heart:

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.<sup>2</sup>

This is the testimony of this man Martin Luther, who had I believe a vision that we shall see tonight in Revelation 12. Perhaps it wasn't in his mind when he wrote the hymn, but certainly the same truth beautifully expressed there.

Will you turn please to Revelation chapter 12. I shall read the chapter. I trust you will follow and note it carefully. May I say this to you, who are joining us for the first occasion, Revelation is the one book of the Bible attached to which is a promise of blessing for the reading. Our Lord has said, "Blessed are they that read" (Rev. 1:3a). And I believe that this has been fulfilled abundantly in our hearts during the weeks we have studied it together.

Now hear carefully:

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: <sup>2</sup>And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, <sup>8</sup>And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. <sup>13</sup>And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. <sup>14</sup>And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place,

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.

<sup>2</sup> "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" Music and words by Martin Luther, 1529.

where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. <sup>15</sup>And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. <sup>16</sup>And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup>And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

As you know through the centuries there have been a great many interpretations of the book of Revelation. There has been that group, which have looked at the Scripture historically trying to fit it to what has happened in the past. There has been another company that has looked at it, as all being in the future trying to establish a scheme of eschatology and there then is another company which are simply trying to find in it the spiritual meaning that it has in the principles which are so clear and self-evident. I suppose in a sense we are not being held by loyalty to any of the three points of view but simply trying to find what this has. I do not think what we are saying is necessarily contradictory to any other points of view or certainly the Scripture is capable of many different things being drawn from it. Like a mine there are jewels to be found on every page and when you've gone over it once you can go right back over, you never exhaust it.

But I am sharing with you through these studies that what we saw in the seven seals was the progress right on from that time that it was seen, from the time of the early church with John until the present. Not that they were opened in sequence necessarily, but that they were the revelation of that which was transpiring. The going forth of the Word as we seem to view it through the White Horse and the wars which have continued. Not that the Word went forth and then wars began, but simultaneously these moved on across the centuries. When we saw the trumpets being sounded and viewed them as satanic delusions, we realized that delusions began and have continued there's been a sequence of satanic delusion and perhaps we're living in the time when it is more rampant than ever before. Certainly the fifth trumpet, or the sixth trumpet rather had reference to the extending of these delusions and we might be well in the midst of that at this time. And the seventh trumpet had reference to the consummation of all things. Perhaps this is the time, but we are not here to set dates, but rather to see principles and to see that wherever the Gospel has been rejected there has been Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum God has enabled or permitted strong delusion to come from Satan that men rejecting the Truth should believe a lie. And this has been progress we that have seen as we've studied these various trumpets and the seals.

But now we come to something that is neither trumpets nor seals, but carries in it the story of the Gospel and the encounter with Satan and the ultimate victory of the Lord Jesus Christ in one chapter. And it is to my mind a delightful coincidence that it should have fallen on Easter Sunday.

Let us notice now verse by verse this wonderful portion. Notice the first verse, "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: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." Throughout all the Old Testament God calls Israel His wife. He says that He is married to her. That He has purchased her. He has committed Himself to her He's bound to her with a covenant of love. And I would like to suggest to you that this woman that is seen here is that people of God that ecclesia in the Old Testament that drawn out company that He called Israel His own people. And that from way back in Genesis this people called to Himself was pregnant with the promise of the redeemer. For "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. 3:15). And the promise began there. And then you recall how that it was through Noah He gave the picture of salvation from wrath and by the marvelous illustration of Isaac's life that child born after due season, when Abram was past conceiving and Sarah was past bearing. God supernaturally quickened their bodies and gave Isaac testifying that God's seed should be called thru the supernatural birth of the greater Isaac. And then down to Moses and Israel drawn out and right on across the centuries every type is a type of Christ, every shadow foreshadows Christ and throughout the Old Testament here is this woman Israel, travailing. Then finally the prophets as they speak of this one that is to come. Isaiah as he groans in agony at the sufferings of the Messiah. And the prophecies concerning the woman that should bear, the virgin that should bring forth a Son, and "unto to us a Son is given, on to us a child is born and the government shall be upon His shoulders" (Isa. 9:6).

All thru the Old Testament this continuous testimony of Israel travailing to be brought forth, paining to be delivered, of this child of promise. But as we see this in the foreshadowing of Christ, John sees another picture, another side of the same scene and "there appear another wonder in heaven, behold a great red dragon."

Now I do not believe we have any zoological record of a dragon, whether it's a creature that's been conjured up by men trying to imagine all the ferocity and cruelty and power in a beast, but at any rate it's the word that's used here. I would submit to you that the dragon is a type of Satan and when we see him being cast out of heaven and his tail drawing the third part of the stars of heaven may we go back to the Old Testament record which tells us about Lucifer, the son of the morning, moved with envy, moved with pride, who decided to he would be like God and set his throne above the throne of God and in revolt made war against God. And our Lord Jesus said, "I saw Satan cast out of heaven as lightening" and this would tell us that a third part of the stars of heaven were the luminaries that served God or can we say the angels that fell with Lucifer (Luk. 10:18). They were cast to the Earth! "I saw Satan fall as lightening from heaven" and to Earth did he come and here was he cast.

Notice that the record is that this dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born. Not just to devour her child, careful reading of the Old Testament will show you that there was Satanic plot and scheme from the very earliest to destroy the line out of which Christ should come. You recall on one occasion there was just one, one little child hidden in the temple and all of the line was exterminated, but ultimately that one child was brought and put on the throne and given rightful heritage and the line was preserved. And across the centuries the dragon has done everything possible to destroy this child and of course it brings its really horrifying climax when you discover that the only ones that were prepared for the coming of Christ were the, can I say the word, pagan, the pagan religious leaders, followers of Zoë aster perhaps, or from some of the other Oriental religions that had the Bible, from the Jews being carried into the dispersion and had read it and had learned about the women to bring forth the child. And seeing the sign in the heavens, these wise men came. Isn't it amazing?

Have you ever stopped to think about this? That the woman represented by Israel had at this time lost all interest in the child that was to be born of her. They weren't looking, they weren't watching. Oh there was scheming and there was plotting on the part of the religious leaders to somehow get greater concessions from Rome and the Sanhedrin didn't want the power of Rome broken, the people did. We saw Friday night that there was a little small company in Israel at the time of zealots, nationalist, trying break the power of Rome. But Israel had settled down under ease contentedly making her peace with Rome, performing her ritual, keeping her smoke going from her offerings in the temple, but losing sight of that which was to come of her. And it was three magicians, three wise men; three priests of Oriental religions that were there, that came. Led by the star, led by God in order that perhaps thru them might be provided that which was necessary for the sustenance of the little family when they were in their exile in Egypt. For they brought gifts that would have been easy to carry and would have represented great wealth and would have sustained them in Egypt for a considerable time.

But when these three wise men came to Jerusalem, they said, Where shall He be born? Where? Went to Herod and Herod was there representing everything vile, and evil, and lustful, and selfless. Everything in open rebellion against God while outwardly kowtowing and bowing to the religion of the day. But no heart in it.

And Herod said, we'll send for the priests. Where is He to be born? The answer came back "Bethlehem of Ephratah out of Thy shall come the deliverer" (Mic. 5:2). So they went knowing from the woman, from the woman, where the child should be born, but there was no interest. No evidence that so much as one of the priests said, we'll join you. Herod, of course, in his subtlety said, "Bring me word that I may come and worship" (Mat. 2:8). But we know what was in his heart for "God led the Magi to go away by another road" (Mat. 2:12). And peaked, and crossed and angry he did as you would expect a despot under satanic control to do, he sent his soldiers down to Bethlehem and they slew the children. "Every child under two years of age" (Mat. 2:16).

Now many people, many scholars rather feel the Magi didn't come on the evening of the birth of Christ, but they came in some months, say eighteen months, two years afterwards. But as the case may be and we needn't decide upon it nor attempt to settle it. Still it was in God's time that they came and for God's purpose that they came, this we know that every child two years of age and under in Bethlehem was slain. Archeologist were amazed some years ago in opening one of the cellars in the city to find skeletons of scores of little children that age and younger which could have been actually those that had been case into the pit. This was the dragon working through Herod to destroy the male child.

Now notice as we come to this fourth verse, "He was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born." But he failed, he failed. She brought forth a man child, our Lord Jesus born of the virgin Mary was protected by God's sovereign intervention and supernatural provision carried down into Egypt for He said, "Out of Egypt did I call my Son" (Mat. 2:15). And then back by the road of the Mediterranean Sea, back into Nazareth and from there to His ministry at the age of thirty, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. "Unto us" said Isaiah, "a child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, and upon His government there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:6-7). This Child that was brought forth of Israel was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. And "her Child was caught up unto God." This carries with it in these few phrases the life of Christ and the ministry of Christ and the death of Christ on the cross and His victory in rising from the dead and all that He accomplished by His resurrection. Then His ascension into Heaven and His enthronement at the right hand of the Father.

"Her Child was caught up onto God, and to His throne." He had left the throne to come, "all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (Joh. 1:3). He had left that throne for a manger, He left that throne for a carpenter's shop, and for a cross but now He's there. He was there before His incarnation. He was there in Spirit, for God is Spirit, His eternal Son, but you see when He went back. He went back as the Man that was given of Israel and dear heart; there is a Man in the Glory tonight. This is the truth of the resurrection, there's a Man in the Glory with a body, a body of flesh and of bone, a body that has eaten of the fish on the shore of Galilee, a body into the hands of whom had been placed into the fingers of His disciples they had felt Him and handled Him and He's there. He's in there in the Glory and this is the marvel of it that to Jesus Christ, the God Man, after His resurrection all the attributes of a Triune God are manifest in a man.

Thus this Man, this Child that was born has been caught up to His throne. And the wonder of it is that the One who sits upon the throne has all authority in heaven and earth has a human body. Now the life is not in the blood, but in the spirit. But sure of this it's a body like unto your body and He rules for it is His throne.

Now when the dragon was unable to destroy the Son, the Child, what did he do? He turned to the woman for you find the continuity here that God's people before the cross of coming of Christ are called the woman and then God's people afterwards are called the woman. It's not the church known as the bride of Christ, indeed it is. Everyone that's in Christ is part of that bride. So we find the continuity. John sees the woman now is the object of Satan's hatred. He couldn't do anything to the Child. He tried, he couldn't success and the Child was "caught up unto God unto His throne."

"The woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that He should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." I would not literalized the days and say that they represent some period in the past or in the future. But may I be so bold as to suggest that the days represent the entire time that God wants the church to be in the world, however long that maybe. They're there and this is to be His purpose. He is going to take care of His bride. He is going take care of those which are His. "Fled into the wilderness she hath a place prepared of God and God is going to feed her."

What did our Lord Jesus Christ say in Matthew 16 as He gave that revelation to the Disciples? You'll recall how He said to them, "Whom do men say that I am?" (Mat. 16:13) And the answer was "some say that your, Elias; and others that you're, Jeremias, and some Isaiah. Whom do you say that I am? Peter speaking for them said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:15-16). Alright. He said, Alright Peter upon this rock, upon this fact that I am the Messiah, that I am God come in the flesh, that I have come to redeem, to ransom, to deliver upon this truth, this grand central fact of revelation that, "I am Christ the Son of the living God." "I am going to build My church; and" What? "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, the gates of hell" (Mat. 16:18). You know that the gate was where the judges sat in the Old Testament parlance. It was the place where the government was represented and when He says this He is saying all the strategies and all the powers and all the subtleties and all the delusions that Satan can invent and all the clandestine efforts that it can exert are not going to prevail against My church. This is the glorious truth.

Now, this woman that fled into the wilderness is not the church as it has been seen in its physical splendor. You must make a distinction between the church and the church. You must indeed if you ever to understand Scripture. You must recognize that the church is not the organization that has been visible exerting political power, producing its hope, producing its

organizations, producing the political pressure. This is not the woman that fled into the wilderness. That church is never didn't have to flee. It's had its armies. It's had its forces. It's had its powers. It's had its princes. It's never needed to flee. From what should it flee? It is quite capable of competing in the halls of argument and debate and politics. No, no this public thing, this visible thing has never fled into the wilderness.

I think one of the most interesting studies that you can make is the little church that's existed parallel of the organized church. You go back in church history and you discover that shortly after Constantine married the church to the world in 313AD, that the persecution broke out. There was a little company of people called the Montanists. They were not very numerous. They weren't very strong, but they refused to bow to that organization that exert such tremendous pressure and was the church. So what do we find? We find that the church history is the arguments against the Montanists and accusations against the Montanists. This little people were hounded and hunted and hurt. Driven out and persecuted and slain. By whom? The world. Oh, no. When Constantine married the church to the world, no longer did persecuted strangely enough come from the world, it now came from the church. It's that interesting.

Previously, Satan had been outside. He'd been trying to destroy by persecution, by attack, but he didn't do it now. Who was leading the persecution? The church. They're the ones that are performing the inquisitions and calling for execution. The Montanists and a little later, sometime later you have the Albigenses. And then you come up to the Waldensians and Anabaptists all across the centuries you have that little group that didn't bend, that didn't bow, didn't break, a little group hidden and hated. Then of course, in the church you had those who were renegades against authority. Oh you go back to Francis of Assisi<sup>3</sup> and here is this dear man, who love God and who had no time for the machinations and the politics of the organization of which he was a part.

You come on later and you'll find Savonrola<sup>4</sup> that man that dared to stand and indict against the sins of the day. And still further you'll find that you have such men as Meister Eckhart<sup>5</sup>, and John of Ruysbroeck<sup>6</sup>, and Tauler<sup>7</sup> and then finally you come down to Archbishop Fenelon<sup>8</sup> and Madame Guyon<sup>9</sup>. Who was it that put Madame Guyon in prison? What was the reason for her going, because of her evangelical testimony. Always across the centuries God's had its few. He's had them and the history is replete with the woman in the wilderness. God has kept them and today He still has them. Is it the great denominations meeting in their world efforts, their ecumenical enterprises, is this the church? I think not, I think not. I think it's those that are invisibly to organization and to political calculators. The little group perhaps meeting someplace today Siberian slave camp, sitting there unable to have wine and bread, but drinking cold water and doing it in the Name of the Lord. Squeezing the currents that they've saved and get something that would tint the water red to speak to them of the blood that was shed. I see that little company in the hills of China as they've gather behind the bamboo curtain. They're not the ones that are in the Three-Self Movement down in Shanghai. They're not the ones that have recognition. They're not the ones that get into the report of leaders. The little group that are here persecuted, hated, hounded and they're the ones He is sustaining and He is supporting. He has them and He has them here. I don't suppose for one moment that every member of the body of Christ in our local area, in this fellowship nor would I think for a moment that every member whose name is on our rolls is in the body of Christ. But I would simple say this that if you're in Christ you're in the church. If you've been born again, filled with the Spirit you're His and you're in the church and if you're in the church and in Christ then you haven't a great deal of interested in all these other things they're peripheral, they're extraneous and they don't amount to much. You're not interested, because you've been driven into wilderness and all you can see is Jesus. He fills the horizon of your heart.

So tonight let's remember that "the woman fled into the wilderness." She has a place prepared of God. And in all the time continues until the last member is in and the number is complete and the Lord says the mystery of God is finished He is going

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<sup>3</sup> Francis of Assisi (1181-1182) An Italian Catholic Friar

<sup>4</sup> Girolamo Savonrola (1452-1498) An Italian Dominican Friar

<sup>5</sup> Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

<sup>6</sup> John of Ruysbroeck (1293-4-1381)

<sup>7</sup> Johnannes Tauler (1300-1361)

<sup>8</sup> Francois Fenelon (1651-1715)

<sup>9</sup> Madame Guyon (1648-1717)

to feed and sustained and protect His church. Don't think for a moment that it's going to be finished until the Lord finishes it. No, indeed. No, indeed.

Now let us notice it goes back again, here in verse 7: "There is war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 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. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation." Now, this is true in two particulars. First it's true of that to which we have recorded in the Old Testament where Lucifer and his angels were cast out. I think that appeared a little earlier up here in the 3rd verse.

Personally, I feel that verses 7 to 9 give to us that which has transpired at the resurrection of Christ when captivity was led captive and Christ was given that throne. Previous to that it seems that Satan had the power to go into the presence of God and accuse those whom God had called. Their redemption had not been accomplished. They were living in faith in anticipation and you know from the record of Job that Satan did appear before God accusing Job. And I would suggest to you that possibly this gives us insight into the fact that up until the time of the resurrection of Christ, this was one of the things that Satan could do. To go into the presence of God and accuse those that were among the redeemed. But it seems that the coming of Christ to His throne met that the power that Satan had exerted in these heavens, this ability to accuse before Him was forever finished and that he can't do that any longer. For there is One in the heavens now, who has our names written in His hands and we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And if you're in Christ and trusting in His shed blood, you needn't fear of one going in presence of God and bring accusation.

Now I believe that this is no longer the function of Satan that it can't be done, he was casted out. Have here "this war in heaven Michael and his angels" enforcing the victory of Christ and that no longer is he able to go into the presence of God accusing the redeemed. For we have One there, our advocate, whose blood testifies the advocacy of cleansing and the sufficiency of grace. I would suggest at the same time however probably he doesn't do that any longer, but he has succeeded in getting the brethren to accuse each other. He used to be the accuser of the brethren, but now apparently, his strategy since he has been cast out of heaven, has been to get men and women to make accusations against each other.

Oh how often it is that when you sit with a company of people, instead of letting their hearts being filled with glorious adoration of the risen Christ, they turn out to be lint pickers criticizing preachers, criticizing Christians, criticizing this, and criticizing that. That function which was satanic the accuser the devil, accuser of the saints by the devil, now no longer is permitted to him, so His same spirit seems to prevail in the hearts of backslidden Christians who do it. I submit to you that if you should discover that you should have such a proclivity and tendency that you deal with it as the fever that we saw last Sunday morning. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if from here after in our fellowship when someone came around to criticize you'd say, "Oh my, I am so sorry you have a fever today. I do trust you'll be better." I think that nothing more than that would have the effort of just making it seem so ludicrous and so ridiculous that after a little while of saying, "Oh my, I am so sorry you have a fever." This would just completely stop it. And the devil would have lost one of his prime strategies of robbing the Lord Jesus of the blessing and the victory that was His by His being sent to His throne. No, no he was no longer able to go into the presence of God, because there is One there who has our names written in His hands and when accusations are level against His own, He said, see Father I suffered, I died, I shed My blood and if You have an accusation against them, You level it at Me. Marvelous to realize that this is no longer possible.

No wonder, "the loud voice cried in heaven now has come salvation the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before out God day and night." Marvelous to realize this too is one of the victories of our Lord's triumph. It is finished. No longer can the enemy engage in this nefarious and wicked task.

Now we come to verse 11 the secret of victory of the woman in the wilderness and every child of God assaulted and attacked by the enemy, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by their word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

I am going to leave that and conclude with that in just a moment. Let's now go on to see the rest of the chapter. We'll come back to verse 11. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

I was interested in reading one commentator who said, "The wings of the eagle are two. The one is the Word of God and the other is prayer. They both carry them into the presence of the Lord where he is sustained and strengthened." Well, that's lovely typology and very true you know we do have the Word of God and prayer. And it's something we can lay hold of perhaps it will bless some heart. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood."

I would suggest to you that possibly this water that is here referred to is satanic delusions. We've seen that this was the trumpets, "And out of his mouth comes floods" that would have the tendency to destroy, to drown. Could it not be well seen by us today, that this flood which has come is of satanic origin, which is permitted of God, because of the fact of the world has rejected the Gospel. For always remember satanic delusions arise, at least since the time of Christ, where the Gospel has been spurn, neglected and rejected.

Now could it not be here that these floods are such. Just take some of the philosophies that have become so prevalent in the last 200 years. Think of the multitudes that have been destroyed by them. Think of that higher criticism, which has attacked the inspiration and authority of the Scripture. Think of that blatant modernism which denied the deity of Christ. Think of some of the other things that are related to it, such as Communism, which engulfs such a large portion of the world. But what happen what happened in this?

Take this atheistic Communism as it went into Russia. Did it succeed in swallowing up the church and drowning the church? No. I would suggest to you, though I can't prove it at the moment, that there are probably more Bible believing evangelical Christians today, disenfranchised of course and certainly not members of the party in power. But I would suggest to you probably one of the purest expressions of the church of Jesus Christ would be found in Russia. And I would say that if you went to some of the slave camps you would find there church meeting underground and clear across the country.

You know it's a marvelous thing to realize that God makes the wrath of men to praise to Him. And isn't marvelous here that when these floods came out, "the earth helped the woman." Notice it, "the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." And so the woman, the church, the redeemed, those are the Lord's people. They weren't destroyed by it. They had all came to destroy them, but they were protected because the earth helped them and the earth become the blotting paper, if you please, that absorbed it, sopped it up. They opened their month and swallowed it up, but not the church. Not His own and today...

I remember years ago, oh this is 20, 25 years ago, I guess when I first began my ministry. I heard a man tell of an experience that he had in Russia. He had come out of Russia, but the secret police had learned that there was a little group meeting in a hidden place. And they had been spied upon by one of the police. The hour came when they had to make the arrest. So this captain of the police led this group in and came to the front of the little hall where they were meeting. It wasn't a church in any formal sense, but a hall. And he came up he said, "In the name of the law, stop you're all under arrest." And he called up his soldiers and had them go to the entrance. Now he said, "I have done my duty and you are arrested and you are to be taken to prison. But as I have spied upon you and listened to what you've said, I have come to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And whereas my duty says I must arrest you, my heart says I must join you." So he took off his epaulets, took off his guns, he took off the ensigns of his authority and he laid them down. And he held out his hands to the manacles and walked out with the others that were led away. He had done his duty, he had to out of faithfulness to those who he served to arrest them, but as one who had come to believe in Jesus Christ he joined them.

And this is what is happening and the Lord is gathering His own in spite of it all. And all the flood of diabolical satanical delusion are not going to prevail, because the church isn't going to have it. When you find delusions come in and you say, look at all these people. What's God is doing? He is winnowing. He is winnowing. I heard some speak about one of our mission fields. He said, "Isn't it a terrible thing what's happening to the Christians." No, no terrible things don't happen to the Christians. Terrible things happen to people that have a name to live and they discover that they don't have life. Terrible things don't happen to the Christians. Christians die for Christ. They die for Him, because they love Him. They're born of Him. They've partaken of His life. "They love not their souls unto death." Nominal professors they turn around and flee. They are victimized, but sometimes the Lord has to let that go through just like He lets a troch go through the field. Not to His church. What did He say, "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed," but it didn't do any good, "because the remnant of His seed keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Now back to verse 11 as we conclude, "And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Listen, every one of us are subject to satanic assault. You see we forget that we live in a world the god of which is Satan. We forget that we live in a world in which there are a myriad of evil spirits and demons. We forget that those demons are continuously looking for minds and intellects that they can use and wills that they can control. And we forget that Satan is doing everything he possibly can to get vehicles through which he can express his own diabolic ideas.

Scripture tells us very explicitly, "give no place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). One of the tragic consequences of sin in the life of the Christian is broken fellowship with God, is it exposes the heart and opens the heart to satanic attack. And oh dear child of God hates him. Fear God and hate sin. When you find you've grieved God, make haste to flee from it. Confess it. Forsake it. Know the cleansing of the Blood. Don't allow yourself as much as a moment being exposed to the attacks of the enemy, because, oh, how the fiery darts come when the helmet is off.

Ideas and suggestions come to the imagination and to the intellect. For this is the matter though which he moves. Just as the Spirit of God woos through the truth that's brought to the mind, so Satan as he moved in the garden making suggestions to Eve. Moves today and the fiery darts that are directed are invariably directed to the imagination. And that's why the Scripture says, "Girt up the loins of your mind." Don't let your mind go willow gathering. Don't let your mind run around like an untrained puppy that's never learned how to come to heel. No, no don't do that.

What are you to do? You are to put on the whole armor of God and in that whole armor of God is the helmet of salvation. This is what it says "they overcame him through the blood of the lamb." What does this blood testify to? It testifies that God became flesh and dwelt among us. It testifies that the Lord Jesus met Satan in open conflict, as we saw this morning, that love, light, life and truth took everything that hatred, darkness, death and alike could bring. And our Lord conquered Satan in open conflict. The resurrection of Jesus Christ testifies that "He lead captivity captive," that He reigns today (Eph. 4:8). The Blood of Jesus is hated. Why is it that wherever you find men beginning to waver in their loyalty to the truth the first thing they attack is the Blood.

It was Charles Spurgeon<sup>10</sup> who said to the young preachers of Pastors College, "Make much of the Blood, sing of the Blood, speak of the Blood for Satan hates it." When you're under the Blood and covered by its merit you're protected. Oh how Satan hates the Blood for it was that Blood which was shed at Calvary which destroyed his power which brought him into defeat. Remember this dear friend, that when you speak of the Blood of Christ you're speaking of the life of Christ poured out at the cross, which pouring out of life which met the destroying of the power of him that had the power of death. And so make much of the Blood it is... "they overcame him through the Blood of the lamb," though they're realizing this was the occasion of conflict, this was the occasion of satanic defeat, this was occasion of triumph, "they overcame him through the Blood of the lamb."

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Haddon (C.H.) Spurgeon (1834-1892) British Particular Baptist Preacher



Oh when you go out in the morning, just as you put your hat on against the rays the sun and the cold, so cover your mind with the precious Blood. When you begin to find imaginations and thoughts creeping in, resist them, refuse them, confess them and ask God to cleanse you. Don't harbor thoughts of bitterness or strife or uncleanness or selflessness. Deal with the thought as though it were the sin fulfilled. Deal with the thought as though the crime was committed. And God will protect you from the crime. And protect you from the sin. Keep on the helmet of salvation.

And then it says, "The Word of their testimony." What's the testimony? The testimony is that they discovered themselves vile and undone, wretched and worthy of death and hell. And they came to the cross and saw Christ dying for them and they'd since Jesus crucified and buried and raised and seated. Ah, what else did they testify to that when Christ died, they died. When Christ was buried, they were buried. When Christ was raised, they were raised. When Christ was seated, they were seated. How did they overcome him, "by word of the testimony." Their union with Christ.

Have you learned to testify? Have you learned to take your place crucified with Christ, buried with Him and quicken with Him and raised with Him and seated with Him? Have you? You learn the throne rights of a believer? Have you entered into it? O I would love to teach you. I've pressed upon to everyone who hears of me and receive it, the little book *The Authority of the Believer*.<sup>11</sup> I know of nothing more imperative to the child of God in days such as these than to understand the principle there in. It is desperately needed in the church. For the church is being ravaged by a defeated foe, because she's never learned that she has "overcome by the blood of the lamb and by the word of her testimony." He is the High Priest of our profession and when we profess what He's accomplished, He is able to bring the benefit of it into our lives. So if you're harassed, if you're burdened, if you are troubled by the enemy and assaulted, move unto this ground. Come in crucified with Christ and buried with Him and quickened with Him and raised with Him, and seated with Him. This is where you are to live. This is your habitat, this is your abiding place seated with Christ. "The word of testimony and the blood of the lamb they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they love not their lives unto death." Make God bring this to your heart in glorious delivering reality.

Do you want freedom? Do you want victory? Do you want to see the Lord Jesus glorified in your life? So does He. He died to make it possible.

Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father we thank and praise Thee tonight for the victory of Christ. This resurrection day we see "Him leading captivity captive." The chain hosts of hell that laughed and mocked at Him in His anguish and thought they had accomplished that strategic defeat of the Son of God, would never have done what they did had they had known by means of His death, him that had the power of death would be destroyed. Oh how we praise Thee for Thy wisdom, we praise Thee for Thy grace and power, we thank Thee for the Lord Jesus to provide this salvation was willing to endure the cross despising the shame that He might bring us life and that abundantly.

Tonight, we know our Father the woman the church is still hiding, still persecuted and those of us that testify to the truth still going to be despised and rejected. But at the same time our Father, we know that all of the attacks of Satan the dragon will not prevail and that even when he success having one of Thy own killed, it is but to send them with a martyr crown into Thy very presence. Nothing can touch the church. Nothing can touch it. Oh Father tonight, show us that Thou hast given us this glorious victory. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12). Thou hast given us panoply and covering and armor. Thou hast told us that we can overcome through "the blood of the lamb and by the word of our testimony." We thank Thee for those that have gone before us that have testified to their victory. Oh God may we join that company. May we walk with them steadfast "loving not our souls even unto death." Willing if need be to go that way. But grant Lord Jesus that while we live there shall be no compromise, no swallowing of the water of the devil's mouth, no pollution of the delusions of satanic origin. Keep us pure and clean, vessels unto honor, a church

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<sup>11</sup> "The Authority of the Believer" By John MacMillan, 1932.

that can glorify Thy even though hidden in the wilderness, make it true Lord Jesus that out of our lives glory shall come to Thy Name.

For those that are here tonight that do not know the joy of this life and the peace that Thou doest bring and the forgiveness and pardon and release of victory and blessing. Oh, that they might enter into it tonight. For Thy dear children while they covet and claim and enter into all the heritage that's their in Christ. Take this one verse Lord, imprint it deeply on our minds. Don't let us forget it, "they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony." Let this be our victory Lord, victory of this church this testimony may it be true Lord. That Thou gets something for Thyself here that will bring glory to Thee. In the Name and the sake of our Lord Jesus we ask it, Amen.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle, New York City, NY on Sunday Evening, April 2, 1961 (Easter) by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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