



"This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection but the preparation for it."  
—Richard Baxter

12-Apr-13

## *How Did They Overcome? (Part Two)*

As we saw in Part One, [God](#) is keenly interested in whether His people overcome [Satan](#), including [this world](#), which the Devil has shaped, and our own human nature, which he has corrupted and continues to influence. A reading of [Revelation 12:11](#) indicates that the first element in overcoming is "the blood of the Lamb."

In addition to paying the death penalty for our sins and cleansing our consciences, the blood of the Lamb also grants us entrance to the Holy of Holies (see [Hebrews 10:19-23](#)), enabling us to come before the throne of the Most High God. Because of this, we have access to the absolute Deity, the Source of all strength and all encouragement, whose every action is motivated by [love](#). Nothing is too hard for God, and we have access and permission to come boldly before Him and make our requests known to Him.

This stands in contrast to the leaders of men. Kings, generals, politicians, and business executives all learn to limit their accessibility. If every problem and request were brought to them, they would be stretched so thin that they could not attend to the things that only they can accomplish. So they erect a wall of sorts, employing gatekeepers to keep out all but the most important of concerns, and they have good reason to do so.

God, though, is not limited in His ability to manage all things simultaneously. When we come under Christ's blood, we have open access to Him at all times. If our petition accords with His will, there is no limit to what He will do for us. Consider that He was willing to sacrifice His perfect Son—another God Being!—for our benefit; anything we may ask for pales in comparison. As Paul writes, in Christ "we have boldness and access

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with confidence" ([Ephesians 3:12](#)). By that blood, we have access to Him who is above absolutely everything.

In addition, the blood of the Lamb gives us eternal life:

Then [Jesus](#) said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has [eternal life](#), and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ([John 6:53-56](#))

Through partaking of the wine at [Passover](#), we symbolically take in the life in that blood (see [Genesis 9:4](#); [Leviticus 17:11](#), 14). Yet the life that is in *His* blood is *eternal* life. Verse 54, particularly Christ's words, "I will raise him up at the last day," gives us the assurance of the resurrection. Those who have Christ's life in them will be raised up, just as He was raised up. Satan may have the power of death ([Hebrews 2:14](#)), but through the [resurrection of the dead](#), death is swallowed up in victory. He can no longer threaten us with death. Because of the promise of the resurrection, death no longer has a lasting "sting" (see [1 Corinthians 15:54-57](#)).

Verse 56 shows just how close this communion becomes: We abide (dwell or live) in Christ, and He abides in us. This facet of the blood of the Lamb makes it clear that it is part of an ongoing relationship. Some of the previous aspects could be considered as happening in a distant or detached manner, but this shows that the blood is inextricably linked with a relationship. This harmonizes with [John 17:3](#), which says that eternal life—what we have through the blood—is to *know* the Father and the Son. Thus, Christ's blood enables us to overcome Satan, his world, and our own [sin](#), because the Father and the Son are now living in us, and *anything* that we need to be victorious is available.

While the blood of the Lamb represents a number of specific things that help us in overcoming, it could be summed up as *doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves*. This is the first element listed in [Revelation 12:11](#), and as such, it is the first key to overcoming—recognizing that overcoming is actually beyond our own human capability! We cannot atone for our own sins. We cannot truly cleanse our own conscience. We cannot force our way into the Holy of Holies. We cannot give ourselves eternal life. Finally, we cannot resurrect ourselves. We have a part to play in overcoming, but the bottom line is that God does the overcoming in us. He does not merely *help* us. Rather, we beseech Him to overcome the corruption in us, and then we submit to the process

He leads us through.

This point is crucial because God has created us with a human spirit, which includes the human will. The human will can motivate men to accomplish extraordinary things—like climbing Mount Everest, swimming the English Channel, and putting a man on the moon. Yet the *corrupted* human will is wholly insufficient for overcoming *corrupted* human nature, let alone Satan. The human will is dreadfully inadequate.

In [Colossians 2:23](#), Paul warns of "will-worship," which he says has the appearance of [wisdom](#). Will-worship was part of the asceticism active in the Gnostic culture of Colossae, in which the devotees were regimented and disciplined in their religious practice. They *willed* themselves to avoid touching and eating things that they judged to be spiritually impure, but their demonstrations of self-control did nothing to glorify God or edify their fellow citizens. This was not the kind of self-control gained as a [Fruit of the Spirit](#) but a reveling in their own ability to choose an action or way of living and stick to it by their own internal fortitude.

Initially, if we think about it in relation to avoiding sin, this sort of discipline sounds good, and indeed discipline is a good thing. However, will-worship leaves God out of the picture. If God is not the One leading the process of overcoming, then we will inevitably apply our will and efforts to the wrong things, in the wrong time, and in the wrong measure. Moreover, if a strong will were the answer to overcoming, then we would have something to boast of, and we would not need God. We could create ourselves in His image.

Yet, Scripture resoundingly points us back to God and what only He can provide. Creating mankind into the image of *Elohim* is God's project, not ours. Again, this does not mean that we are idle or passive; we have a great many responsibilities in this process. Understanding our part begins with comprehending the blood of the Lamb and how much we cannot do. When we are in that humble state of mind, God can begin turning us and guiding us through the overcoming process on His terms.

Part Three will cover the remaining descriptions of those who overcome Satan and explain why overcoming is so crucial.

- David C. Grabbe

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*From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

[The Talking Blood](#)

**The Talking Blood**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In this sermon, John Ritenbaugh expounds the symbolism of the blood as a witness in I John 5:6. Blood atonement, referenced 427 times in the Bible, dramatically magnifies the seriousness God places on the consequences of sin. Only blood can atone for sin (Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). No forgiveness of sin is possible without death. We dare not minimize or trivialize the impact or consequences of our sins. Forgiveness is not a casual matter with God. The pain of seeing the mangling of His Son's body makes forgiveness a most anguishing and sobering matter. The blood of Christ, a propitiation or appeasing force, the only means to satisfy God's pure sense of justice, is a testimony of God's intense love for us. This willingness to sacrifice needs to be incorporated in our relationship with our brethren (I John 4:10-11).

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*From the Archives: Featured Article*

**Righteousness from Inside-Out**

by David F. Maas

Many people, even in the church, fail to understand the kind of righteousness God is looking for. David Maas shows that God wants it written on our hearts—not just a set of dos and don'ts or rewards and punishments.

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