



"Most people are brought to faith in Christ not by argument for it, but by exposure to it."

—Samuel Shoemaker

19-Apr-13

How Did They Overcome? (Part Three)

We all know the titanic struggle Paul describes in Romans 7, where he talks about wanting to do what is right yet doing what is wrong instead. He cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" We sometimes stop reading there, but Paul actually supplies the answer in the next verse. *The Amplified Bible* reads, "O thank [God!](#) [He will!] through [Jesus Christ](#) (the Anointed One) our Lord!"

The solution to the evil present within us is deliverance from this body of death through Jesus Christ. This does not happen at [baptism](#) or through a quick [prayer](#) but through the relationship that the blood of Christ makes available, as well as through taking on His image over the course of our lives. Our ultimate deliverance does not come until the resurrection, but along the way, though our submission to God, He overcomes and delivers us from the evil within us and around us. Paul thus concludes his letter to the Romans with a confident declaration: "And the God of [peace](#) will crush [Satan](#) under your feet shortly" ([Romans 16:20](#)). Paul similarly encourages the Corinthians: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([I Corinthians 15:57](#)).

This is not at all to suggest that we sit back and coast. We are told to *resist* the Devil, a very active approach ([James 4:7](#); [I Peter 5:9](#)). Paul commands us in Ephesians 6 to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against Satan. The metaphor of the armor of God is perfect in showing the respective responsibilities of God and the Christian. Every single piece of the armor of God is one that He gives to us. We do not have to *create* the armor of God—we"only" have to make use of it. We cannot gird our waist with [truth](#) unless He first reveals it. We cannot forge our own breastplate of righteousness,

for He has to supply the righteousness. We cannot shoe our feet without first hearing [the gospel](#) of peace. We cannot raise the shield of [faith](#) unless we receive faith as a gift. We cannot craft our own helmet of [salvation](#), for salvation can only come from God. Even the sword of the Spirit—God's Word—is given to us, as is the understanding of how to apply it. God gives us the means to resist Satan and his evil, but God is still the driving force and the One who actually brings about the victory.

In the model prayer, notice that Jesus teaches us to pray, "Deliver us from evil" ([Matthew 6:13](#); [Luke 11:4](#)). We need deliverance from evil *every day*, just as we need "bread" (Christ) and [forgiveness](#) every day. Some translations insert the word "one" after "evil" so it refers to Satan, but it can be limiting to focus solely on Satan, overlooking the evil he has spawned. [This world](#) is evil, as is our corrupted human nature. Each day, then, we need to be delivered from the evil that is external to us and from what is already *in* us. Jesus teaches us to ask for this deliverance because we cannot accomplish it on our own.

Reflecting on [Revelation 12:11](#) and those who overcome Satan "by the blood of the Lamb," we can see that the first step in overcoming is to grasp what the blood of the Lamb does for us and how much we need Him to do anything at all. This is why He says, "Without Me, you can do nothing" ([John 15:5](#)), and why Paul writes, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" ([Philippians 2:13](#)).

The second way Satan is overcome is "by the word of their testimony." A better translation is "they overcame him . . . because of the message of their witness," which includes much more than just public preaching or a verbal confession of faith. Their testimony or witness is solidly grounded in the way they live. When Paul outlines the qualifications of a church leader, a requirement is that he "must have a good testimony among those who are outside" ([1 Timothy 3:7](#)), meaning he has a solid reputation that only comes from right living. Thus, a good testimony depends on a life that is consistent with the message.

Clearly, we cannot be mere observers when it comes to overcoming Satan. True [overcomers](#) make use of all that God provides through the blood of the Lamb, resulting in empowerment to live God's way—something that is not possible for carnal man (see [Romans 8:7](#)). Their conduct, which will be according to God's law ([Hebrews 8:10](#)), demonstrates the indwelling of God's Spirit, the same power that allows a man to choose God's way over the ways of Satan, his world, and corrupt human nature. Overcomers are not sinless by any means, but the overall trajectory of their lives is one of walking ever closer with God. Their life with Him is the message of their witness, and as they walk closer with God, they move farther away from Satan and his way. Satan is

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overcome through the deliberate practice of living by God's standards.

[Revelation 12:11](#) also states that "they did not [love](#) their lives to the death," demonstrating an attitude of complete surrender to God, whether or not martyrdom is actually involved. When we come under the blood of the Lamb, we are changed from being slaves to [sin](#) to slaves of righteousness (see [Romans 6:16-22](#)). Our lives have been paid for; they are no longer our own. Christ requires that we love Him above all else, including our own lives ([Luke 14:26](#)). Satan and his world are diametrically opposed to our Lord and Master's way of life, and we must be willing to accept the consequences of standing in the truth without compromise, even to the point of physical death. [Hebrews 11:35](#) tells of faithful men and women who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Such a stand, whether the battle is minor or ultimate, demonstrates the value we place on the blood shed for us, and in this way, Satan is overcome.

There is a reason why overcoming is spoken of so highly, and rewarded so richly, and why there is rejoicing in heaven when Satan is overcome. Overcoming represents *success in God's project* of creating sons and daughters in His image. Our ability to overcome means that we have pursued, with all of our being, the divine relationship offered to us, which has resulted in our resembling the Object of our affection in mind, attitude, character, and action. It means we have so successfully taken on the [image of God](#) that, when the ruler of this world approaches, he has nothing in us (*cf.* [John 14:30](#)).

All this begins with the blood of the Lamb and continues because of the blood of the Lamb. Our part is not to focus on Satan or on our sins, though we will certainly be aware of both. Our part is to follow the Lamb, and to get to know Him, because He is the only One who has done what we are trying to do.

- David C. Grabbe

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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and must be motivated by God's Holy Spirit (setting our minds to keeping His commandments, loving God and serving others).

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by Martin G. Collins

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