

How To Overcome Our Enemy

Part 2

Romans 8:28



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FOCAL Read Responsively Revelation 12:11 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.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The enemy of the local Church is Satan. His hand is seen in every false accusation leveled at the Children of God. You see his handiwork in confusion, and wars, and fighting within God's blessed Bride. The Devil, Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Slewfoot - our enemy goes by many names and yet he has but one purpose: he, like a master hunter, lays snares for each and every one of you. He baits these snares (**2 Timothy 2:25**) with honey coated lies and bright shiny worldly objects in hope that you will be deceived and entrapped. Like a Las Vegas casino or a drug dealer Satan knows that the odds are in his favor. The Vegas casino gives away money, knowing that - if you gamble just once - there is a likely chance you will gamble again. The drug dealer often gives "free samples" knowing that most people who try his product will be drawn to purchase more because "**the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy**" (**James 4:5**). Satan knows that the soul surrendered to him but once may be his forever. The lost person surrendered to Satan remains lost, and the saved person surrendered to Satan *acts* lost. In either case that old Devil wins anytime we fail to resist his silky suggestions. The Psalmist tells us:

Psalms 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer

hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

The **young lions** often go hungry. Why? They are strong, filled with vigor and vim, and must faster than the older lion who is well fed.

Young lions often go hungry because they go about puffed up, growling, and proud. As a result their prey hear them coming long before they ever get there. The Christian way of life is not a *proud, puffed up* way of life. The Christian way of life is a humble and submitted way of life.

You become a Christian when you surrender your life to Jesus at the foot of that Old Rugged Cross. You recognize yourself to be a sinner who desperately needs to be under the **Blood of Christ**. You meet the Lord when you **seek the Lord**. "**They that seek the Lord shall not want in any good thing**". "**Submit yourselves therefor to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you**" (James 4:7). God will not withhold salvation from those who seek Him. "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**". (Romans 10:13)

BUT THEN WHAT? We still have an enemy to overcome once we have called upon the Name of Jesus. Satan has not ceased to be your enemy, O Christian - he is more so now than ever before. Satan delights in tormenting Christians. Unbelievers are looking for reasons to discount the message of Christ. If Satan can

get Christians to act as if they are "**twofold children of hell**" (Matthew 23:15) then he has won a great battle. If old Slewfoot can get the believer to despair - and publicly announce that despair before the lost world - then he has won another battle. If the Devil, that old Beelzebub can get a group of Christians to act in a concerted, unChristian manner, then this is worth more than gold to his cause.

How then can we defeat Satan? We need to understand the *Sovereignty of God* - and live within that understanding. The early Church overcame Satan **by the Blood of the Lamb**, that is, every believer was a *true believer* saved by faith in the Cross of Christ. The early Church furthermore **had a Word of testimony**, that is, they *knew* that they were saved. There was a time in their lives that they met Jesus at the foot of the Cross and, *personally believing in Him* they received Him into their lives. But the early Church also **loved not their lives unto the death**. No matter what happened the early Christian *knew* that he or she *belonged to an All Powerful and Sovereign God*. The early Christian knew that **all things work together for good to them that love God**. Why? Because **they are called according to His purpose**.

Let's talk a moment about the Sovereignty of God.

1. Be Sure That You Love God

FOCAL Romans 8:28 And **we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

When a trial or a dark valley occurs in your life the very first question you need to ask yourself is "do I love God". You see, this is the condition set forth in the passage: "**All things work together to them that love God**". So the question the Spirit compels me to ask you today is "Do you love God?"

The question is not "do you love rituals" or "do you love doing religious things", but "do you love God"?

Jesus said to those religious ritualists the Pharisees:

John 5:40-42 And **ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. ... But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.**

God loved the Pharisees - He loves all people. He loved you so very much that **He gave His only begotten Son for you (John 3:16). When we were dead in our trespasses and in our sins (Ephesians 2:1)** the Lord decided to reach out His nail scarred hand for your sin scarred hand. **God loved you, and gave Himself for you (Galatians 2:20).** The Bible tells us that:

1 John 4:9-10 In this was **manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. {10} Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, yet many - like the Pharisees - decided that they would rather love their rituals and their religion. They denied a relationship with Almighty God because they thought they were *good enough* for Heaven. Dear friends, none are *good enough* to get into Heaven. You must receive the Love of God by faith in Christ Jesus. You must turn away from your present way of life and turn toward Him Who loves you still.

Here's an interesting truth: on the day that you turned to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God Himself *put His love* in your heart. The Bible tells us:

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**

How do I know that I am a Christian? **I love God.** Jesus told His disciples:

John 14:15 **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

John 14:21 **He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**

God expects those who love Him to love His Word, to obey His Word, to glorify His Name. A Christian is indwelt by love for both God as well as for others.

How else can I know that I am a Christian? **I love others.** The Bible tells us that:

1 John 4:20-21 If a man say, **I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?** {21} And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

There are many who occupy the Church who say "I love God" but neither serve God nor love the Church. These are **false brethren who have crept in unawares (Galatians 2:4)** who exist to destroy our joy.

Do not let them do so - but make every attempt to lead them to the Lord.

Dear friends, trials often come to break our will, to lead us to the point where we will turn to the Lord Who loves us. **Two blind men (Matthew 9:27)** chased after the Lord, crying out "**Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us**". When they - in this terrible pit of darkness - told Jesus "**Yea, Lord**" He brought them out of darkness and into the light. When **ten lepers** heard that Jesus was coming they cried out "**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us**" (**Luke 17:13**). Their disease brought them to the Great Physician Who, loving them, He brought them out of loneliness and despair and into life. Dear friends, the trials that come upon you may be there for a greater good. God may be using that trial to draw

you to His side and to eternal life.

2. If You Love The Lord, Trust His Sovereign Love

FOCAL Romans 8:28 And **we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,** to them who are the called according to his purpose.

If you love the Lord then you should know that **all things work together for your good.** Let's focus first of all on those words "**all things**".

All things means just what it says. Everything that happens to a Christian is overseen by the Lord Who loves you. We who believe are *firmly* in the hand of Christ. Dear friends, God is in control of ALL THINGS in the Christian's life.

God is in control of the valleys, and in control of the mountains. ALL THINGS.

ILLUSTRATE Bethany Hamilton was surfing off the coast of Hawaii in 2003 when a *1500 pound tiger shark* bit through her surfboard - and most of her left arm. What a terrible tragedy! And yet Bethany says:

"This was God's plan for my life, and I'm going to go with it. ... Jesus Christ ... gave me peace when I got attacked by the shark, which severed my arm, and had to get back to the beach, which would take 20 minutes of paddling." She went on to say "**the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard**

your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus".¹

We can waste our time asking "why" when trials come our way, or we can trust the Sovereign and Almighty God Who has promised to make **all things work together for good to us who love Him**.

When confronted with trial or tribulation the focus of the believer should not be "why". We should instead be focused on loving and serving the Lord Who has loved and served us!

ILLUSTRATE In his book *Loving God* Chuck Colson tells us about how God used a doctor named **Boris Nicholayevich Kornfeld**. Kornfeld was an atheist who was unjustly imprisoned for treason under the reign of Stalin. While in prison Dr. Kornfeld met a Christian man who often cited aloud the Lord's Prayer, and this man eventually led Kornfeld to Christ.

Dr. Kornfeld's life changed from that point on. Whereas he has before denied God, he now told others about the Jesus he came to love. He began to tell one of his patients in the prison about the Lord and what he had done for him. Kornfeld died that very night when someone crept into his cell with a plasterer's mallet and beat him to death. But the patient he witnessed to, **Alexander Solzhenitsyn** (pronounced sol-zhuh-NEET-suhn), would turn his life over to Christ. Solzhenitsyn would go on to win the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for literature, and would write the book **The Gulag-**

Archipelago detailing the terrible abuses in Russian prisons.

We do not often understand the hand of God in our lives, but if we belong to Him we should be willing to *obey Him no matter what*. God allows trials to come into our lives for our own good (if we love Him). We must be willing to obey Him no matter what.

A good illustration of trials and God's sovereign power is found in the life of Job. Job, the Bible tells us:

Job 1:1 ... that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

As it was with Job, so it is with our trials: we often do not understand *why* God is doing what He is doing.

Job loved the Lord. And yet, for reasons that we do not understand, God took away his family (though he left a shrewish wife) and all his property away. How did Job respond? He said:

Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Job's attitude is quite different from many who call themselves Christian today. Today many flock to the local Church hoping to please God so that He will *remove* some trial from their life. Job said:

Job 1:21 Naked came I out of my mother's womb,

¹ from *Shark Survivor* by Rusty Wright, Promisenetwork.com

and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

and told his shrewish wife:

Job 2:10 ... What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Dear friends, if you love the Lord then your faith *must be tested* if it is to grow.

The Bible tells us when our faith is tested:

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {3} Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. {4} But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

An untested faith is an unstable faith. ALL THINGS work together for your good, dear Christian - ALL THINGS.

God came to **Abraham** one day and said,

Genesis 22:2 Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

God didn't tell Abraham *why* this was to be - He just said "do it!" and Abraham did it. If a lesser man had waited 100 years to have a child I don't think he would have so readily obeyed the command of God. But Abraham believed God. He rose up early in the morning and, taking his servants, his son, and some firewood set off for Mount Moriah. When Abraham got close to the mountain he told the servants:

Genesis 22:5 ... Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

It was Abraham's full intention to sacrifice Isaac as God required, but notice his words: "**I and the lad will go yonder ... and return again to you**". Abraham was going to sacrifice his son, but he trusted the Word of God. God had promised him that he would have a whole nation of people through Isaac, and Abraham trusted in the Sovereign love of God.

Abraham was going to do what God told him to do - and trust in the Sovereign Love of God for the outcome.

When Isaac asked his father "**Where is the sacrifice, Dad?**" that old saint replied:

Genesis 22:8 ... My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Dear friends, **God did provide HIMSELF A LAMB.** Behold the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our Lord! God is in control - ALL THINGS work together for good to those who love the Lord.

When **Joseph's brothers** cast him into a pit, sold him into slavery, and reported him as dead, Joseph never asked "Why me?". When **Potipher's wife** falsely accused Joseph of rape he didn't blame God for his imprisonment. Joseph kept serving the Lord and loving Him no matter what. Joseph had no idea that the Lord was using him to make a place for Israel to grow in the land of Egypt. Years before God had promised to **Abraham** that he would be the father of a great nation. Abraham never saw this promise fulfilled, and Joseph had no idea that he would be key in the fulfillment of this promise - but God is faithful.

In time Joseph rose to be second only to Pharaoh in power. When Joseph met his devious brothers he could have attacked them for what they did to him.

Joseph could have *got back at his brothers*, and in so doing could have hindered what God was doing.

How did Joseph respond to his brothers?

Genesis 50:19-20 ... Fear not: for am I in the place of God? {20} But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Joseph was a man who was *visionary*, trusting God even though he did not understand what God was doing. He knew that God was moving to bless Israel, and that he was instrumental in that - and would just keep being obedient to God no matter what condition he found himself in.

God often allows us to suffer so that others can be blessed.

Joseph trusted God so much that he commanded his children to *take his bones out of Egypt when they headed to the Promised Land*. **God is not faithless, but is faithful and loving to those who are His.**

One of the New Testament examples of God's Sovereignty is seen in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul did not start out as a Christian, but is first seen in the Scriptures as a *persecutor of Christians*. It was Paul - then called Saul - who **made havoc of the Church (Acts 8:3), entering houses and dragging men and women off to prison for worshiping Jesus**. It was Saul who stood as a witness while the faithful preacher **Stephen** was unjustly stoned to death. The Bible tells us that **Saul was consenting unto his death (Acts 8:1)**. As a matter of fact, Saul watched over the coats of Stephen's murderers while they stoned him. Stephen had no idea what part he was playing in God's sovereign will, but Stephen was faithful to the end, trusting in the power of God. It is only later we see Saul - now broken - cast down on the Damascus Road, surrendering his life to Jesus. The Lord told His servant Ananias:

Acts 9:15-16 ... Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: {16} For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Stephen was faithful to God, even in the midst of suffering, and his faithfulness was used by the Lord to draw Paul to salvation. Paul himself, once saved, must **suffer for My Name's sake**. God uses our suffering to providentially lead others to blessing.

3. What Then Should Be Our Focus?

FOCAL Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, **to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

Are you **called according to the purpose of God**? Do you know the Lord, and have you surrendered to His calling unto salvation. Then, dear friends, **do what He has commanded you to do** whether it be rainy or sunny in your life. Trust Him, **and lean not to your own understanding.**

If you belong to Jesus then *get right* and begin to obey Him. God demands your obedience in all things.

God told Israel through the Prophet Samuel:

1 Samuel 15:22 .. Hath the LORD as great delight in

burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

God is calling His people to love Him, to obey Him, and to trust Him no matter what might come. When God's people bind together in love we have the ability - through Christ - to change the world around us. Will you do as He has commanded? Will you trust the Lord, and lean not to your own understanding?

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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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.

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1. Be Sure That You Love God

John 5:40-42; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:1; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 4:9-10; Romans 5:5; John 14:15; John 14:21; 1 John 4:20-21

2. If You Love The Lord, Trust His Sovereign Love

Romans 8:28; Job 1:1; Job 13:15; Job 1:21; Job 2:10; James 1:2-4; Genesis 22:2; Genesis 22:5; Genesis 22:8; Genesis 50:19-20; Acts 8:1; Acts 9:15-16

3. What Then Should Be Our Focus?

Romans 8:28; 1 Samuel 15:22
