



# **Beckenham Baptist Church**

A CARING CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Elm Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4JB

Telephone 020 8650 2130

E-mail: [office@beckenhambaptist.org.uk](mailto:office@beckenhambaptist.org.uk)

Web Page: [www.beckenhambaptist.org.uk](http://www.beckenhambaptist.org.uk)

---

## **Bible Reading Notes** **March 2010**



### **JESUS, THE CONQUEROR** **The Victory of the Cross**

**Rev Julia Binney BA, MTh**

# JESUS, THE CONQUEROR

## THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

C H Spurgeon quotes a preacher of his day saying that, 'He taught that our Lord did something or other, which in some way or other was more or less connected with our salvation.' We can be a bit like this sometimes. We know the cross changed everything but we are not sure how. We are in the period that the Church calls Lent, a time of preparation for Easter. We will be looking at what happened to Jesus but now we are going to study the significance of the events of the first Easter. This series looks at how the cross can be seen as Jesus being involved in a great cosmic conflict where he wins the victory over the powers of evil which enslave humankind. This is New Testament theme but it was developed in the 1930's by Gustav Aulen, a Swedish theologian, in his book *Christus Victor*. There are various ways in which we are affected by adverse influences detrimental to our faith in Jesus, our ability to keep going in the Christian life and be effective witnesses to him. By looking at this way of understanding the cross, we can see that we do not have to live under the weight of these but can enter into Christ's victory because his victory is our victory. The following hymn sums it up well:-

We never need be vanquished,  
We never need give in,  
Though waging war with Satan,  
And compassed round by sin.  
Temptations will beset us,  
Allurements oft assail,  
But in the name of Jesus,  
We shall, we must prevail.

He leads us on in triumph,  
An overcoming band,  
While vict'ry crowns his progress,  
For none can stay his hand.  
Our eyes are on our leader,  
His presence is our might,  
He arms us for the conflict,  
And trains our hands to fight

God wills not that his people  
By sin enthralled should be,

But that their lives henceforward  
Be lives of victory;  
And so at our disposal  
He places all his power,  
That we from his resources  
may draw in danger's hour.

Herein is hid the secret  
Of an all-glorious life,  
Whereby we conquer Satan,  
And rise above sin's strife.  
Abiding in the Saviour,  
Self prostrate in the dust,  
We live to do his bidding,  
In glad perpetual trust.

We in ourselves are nothing,  
A small and feeble host,  
Nor have we aught of prowess  
Wherewith to make our boast,  
Our stronghold is Christ Jesus,  
His grace alone we plead,  
His name our shield and banner,  
Himself just all we need.

Victory in Jesus' name,  
Victory our hearts proclaim,  
Victory, glorious victory

W A GARRATT

Each day we look at a relevant scripture and some comments. There are some pointers for reflection but try to take time to look at the passage and see what you make of it. There is also a prayer adapted from a TAIZE Book of Common Prayer. I pray that through these notes we will all gain a new and deeper understanding of the victory that Christ won for us on the cross as we prepare for Easter and how we can know and experience this victory in our lives.

Julia Binney

Monday 1st March 2010

## VICTORY

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

A piece in an old Youth for Christ Magazine entitled 'Victory through Trust in Christ' neatly illustrates verse 57:- 'A painter once painted the devil playing a game of chess with a young man whose eternal soul was at stake. The scene shows the devil with a look of glee on his face as he checkmates the young man whose look of despair acknowledges defeat. There appears no other move for him to make. A great chess player came across the work of art and, after carefully studying the game, he set up a chess board with the pieces in a similar position. After much thought and time, he saw that defeat could be turned into victory. By making just one certain move on the young man's behalf, the devil was placed in a position of utter defeat. In the game of life, youth (or anyone at any age!) has no chance against the wiles of the devil who is determined to ruin the soul. But at Calvary, the Lord Jesus intervened and made a 'move' that enables youth today (and all), who trust in Christ, to have complete victory— *'Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

- Are there any areas of your life where you, at this time, do not feel you have the victory?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you knew that the devil was defeating you but that you saw God turn that defeat to victory?
- Can you look back in your life to a time when you lived more victoriously for Christ than you do now?

### A Prayer

O Christ, in your resurrection you have burst the gates of the dwelling of the dead. You have destroyed sin and death. By your victory, I implore you: keep me victorious over sin and direct my life as your new creation. O Lord, hear my prayer.

Tuesday 2nd March  
**THE LAST ENEMY**  
1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Corrie ten Boom, the Dutch writer, speaker and survivor of a concentration camp wrote, 'The first step on the way to victory is to recognise the enemy.'

Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians about Christ's death and resurrection, his victorious reign, his enthronement at the right hand of God and his ultimate authority over all creation. Jesus is Lord of all because of his conquest over his enemies. Jesus has destroyed all dominion, authority and power (v24) which means any kind of opposition to God whether social, political, economic, ethical or spiritual. However, the full extent of this reign appears to be hidden and yet to be revealed. This means that Jesus is already the ruler of the world but only at his coming again will he annihilate all that currently possess any kind of lordship or power. The outcome for all who at present stand in opposition to God is ultimate defeat. The last enemy to go is death. The principle of death, corruption and decay that entered God's good creation as a result of the sin of humankind is reversed by the death of Jesus. He died the death for us all so that all might live— *In Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive* (v.22). This is amply explained in Hebrews 2:8,9— *In putting everything under him, God left nothing that was not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

- How do you see death—as the end or the beginning?

A Prayer

Lord Jesus, by your wounds and your bitter death; by your resurrection and your reigning in power; by your continual intercession and by your return in glory: - strengthen me, Lord.

Wednesday 3rd March  
**FREEDOM FROM FEAR**  
Hebrews 2:14-18

We all have things we fear. As George Bernard Shaw wrote, 'There is one universal passion— fear.' Some of these fears are entirely right and sensible and are designed to protect us, like fear of violence. Others are entirely irrational and serve no good purpose, like a fear of spiders. Some irrational fears and phobias can grip people's lives to such an extent that they just cannot function properly. There is a woman who has such a fear of worms that she cannot leave her house. She is imprisoned by her fear. There are some for whom death is such a fear that it blights their lives. They are enslaved by it.

Here we are introduced to the triple enemy of sin, death and the devil. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that Christ is our perfect pioneer who meets these sinister powers head on. It was necessary for him to take the same nature as ourselves in order to deal effectively with these enemies. Outside of Christ, we are like powerless enslaved convicts who need to be released. By sharing our flesh and blood and experiencing death (v.14), Jesus deals victoriously and eternally with all that binds us—*if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed* (John 8:36). Ivor Smith-Cameron, an Anglican priest, made this observation—'Whenever I hear about Christ as Saviour it appears that he saves us from sin - and I don't want to deny that - but in my experience he does more than that: he releases us from fear, and I think fear is the great killer.'

- Are you gripped by any fear that affects your life?
- Do you know what it is to be freed from the fear of death to be enabled to embrace life?

A Prayer

For victory over error; for setting me free from fear and despair; for the advancement of your reign of justice, of peace and of love — I bless your holy name!

Thursday 4th March  
**FROM DEATH TO LIFE**  
Romans 5:6-11

Why do we fear death? Certainly we fear the whole process, we fear pain, but we also fear uncertainty. We fear facing a holy God because of our sin and ungodliness, those things we are ashamed of. We are powerless to do anything about it. As a consequence, many try to deny God's very existence and prefer the option of total annihilation rather than believe in any kind of life after death. Living in such denial is not really life, just mere physical existence. To deny God, his love and salvation is not what real life is all about. When we receive God's free gift of salvation won for us on the cross, we receive God's gift of divine life. Jesus Christ came that we might have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Jesus died our death for us, in our place, so that we can live life as God meant it to be. Jesus said to Martha following the death of Lazarus, *I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die* (John 11:25). On the night he was betrayed, Jesus spoke to his disciples in the Upper Room. He knew he would soon be condemned to die on a cross but he comforts his disciples by promising them that he was going to his Father's house to prepare a place for them (and us) (John 14:2). Death for the Christian is not to be feared as a step into the unknown because Jesus has gone ahead of us. Even though we will face judgement before the throne of God (Hebrews 9:27), we will have nothing to fear because Christ died for us (v.8). Christ was sacrificed to take away our sin (Hebrews 9:28).

- We are still sinners but sinners saved by grace.

A Prayer

God Almighty, I bless you for calling me to know you, to love and serve you in spite of all I do wrong. You enlighten by ignorance by the light of the Gospel; wash away my sin. Amen.

Friday 5th March  
**THE WAGES OF SIN**  
Romans 6:19-23

The Bible tells us that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) and *the wages of sin is death* (v.23). We know that we are sinners because we all die. One of many stories about Leonardo da Vinci when he was painting 'The Last Supper' was that he searched for a model for his Christ and eventually found a young chorister from Rome called Pietro Bandinelli, who was 'lovely in life and features.' Years passed and the painting was still unfinished. All the disciples had been portrayed save one - Judas Iscariot. He had to find a man whose face was hardened and distorted by sin. At last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous he shuddered when he looked at him. He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. When he was about to dismiss the man, he said 'I have not yet found out your name.' 'I am Peitro Bandinelli,' he said, 'I also sat for you as your model of Christ.' The sinful life of years had so disfigured the once fair face of the young man beyond recognition. Sin has this ravaging effect on us causing decay and death like a disease.

But *Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God* (1 Peter 3:18); (Christ) bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). Christ is the cure to sin and sin's effects. We know we all grow old and we will still die, physically, but we no love have to act in accordance with our sinful nature. We will never be completely free from the bias of sin in our humanity but we can be free from its power to dominate our lives.

Prayer

You have ransomed me from the slavery of sin, in spite of all my wanderings, by the precious blood of your only Son, and we have given me glory and freedom - Be my rock and my fortress, O Lord!

Saturday 6th March

## NEW LIFE

Romans 6:1-14

Before we come to Christ, we are powerless to live any other way despite all our good intentions, our vows and pledges to turn over a new leaf, and our resolutions to live a better life. Sin still has mastery over us. As Paul puts it – *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing* (Romans 7:19). The struggle with sin makes him feel wretched and he cries out - who will rescue me from this body of death (Romans 7:24).

- Have you ever struggled with sin like this?
- Do you still feel wretched about the sin in your life?

In his next breath, *Paul is able to say thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (7:25). He goes on to testify that *through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:2). We need to remember that sin is not the master of our lives any more. We do not need to obey the self-focussed, ungodly desires of the sinful nature. When Jesus. When Jesus was crucified, our sinful natures were crucified with him (v.6) and from his resurrection life we are given new life (v.4). On the cross Jesus bore our sin and submitted to its burden and by dying, he broke the link between sin and death. The first step towards victory over sin in our lives is living by faith in the light of this truth. When we count or reckon ourselves dead to sin (v.11) in this way, we feel like we are dying. Part of us is being put to death - but this is the way to life.

### A Prayer

O Christ, in your resurrection you have rendered death powerless. You have given me new life. By your victory I implore you: direct my life as your new creation. O Lord, hear my prayer.

**Sunday 7th March**  
**IN CHRIST**  
**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

Henry Drummon, the nineteenth century Scottish evangelist, wrote, 'Sin is a power in our life: let us fairly understand that it can only be met by another power.' It is only in Christ that we can be victorious over sin. When we are united with Christ through faith and commitment, we are changed and made new. We are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (v.17). We are no longer imprisoned and enslaved by sin and death, trapped by our weakness and mortality. We look to Jesus on the cross, the victim of all the evil bondages that imprison and destroy people. He is free and he promises freedom. He says to us - 'In me there is freedom; there is nothing you have done or been in the past from whose guilt and power I cannot release you; there is no habit, no fear whose hold over you I cannot break, no situation so frustrating and destroying that I cannot show you how to win the victory. Amidst sin and suffering I was free and opened the door to freedom and I can do it again for you.'

God has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). We are no longer subject to a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1) but have been set free to be children of light, citizens of heaven - *For you were once darkness, but you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)* (Ephesians 5:8,9). We have been set free, restored in Christ, to live according to God's will to fulfil his purposes for his creation.

- Admit your bondages in God's presence and invite him into the places where you feel most imprisoned and helpless.
- Test his claim of victory and taste his freedom

A Prayer

Come to me Lord in your unconquerable power. Prove to my heart the goodness of God - Amen!

Monday 8th March  
**DISARMING THE POWERS**  
Colossians 2:9-15

Here Paul confirms our new status in Christ based on faith in the God who raises the dead (v.12). In Christ, we belong to the new world, where the 'rulers' of the old world have no authority. By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, we have been transferred into the family of the new age. The 'heavenly' life which we now enjoy does not mean that we escape the troubles and temptations of earthly existence but are committed to working out the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection practically in our lives. For when God looks at us he reckons that what is true of Christ is true of us as well. We have died with Christ and so are made alive with him (v.13). Paul explains what this means:-

1. God forgave our sin (v.13).
2. He cancelled the written code (v.14) - as if a bill writing off a debt and declaring it as paid, or a list of charges against us with cleared across it, was nailed to the cross with Jesus.
3. He disarmed the powers and authorities (v.15).

This is summed up in the following translation of verses 13-15 - *He forgave you all your sins and wiped out the charge-list, which set our all your self admitted debts, a charge-list which was based on the ordinances of the law, and which was in direct opposition to you. He nailed it to his cross and put it right out of sight. He stripped the powers and authorities of all their power and publicly put them to shame and, through the cross, led them captive in his triumphal train.*

- What do you understand by powers and authorities?
- If Christ has decisively conquered evil on the cross, why is it still so powerful in the world today?

A Prayer

Lord, you have brought up my soul from hell, you have revived me. May I walk in newness of life.

Tuesday 9th March

## EXALTATION

Ephesians 1:15

There are two aspects of Christ's victory over death - the resurrection and his exaltation to a position of power and authority. Both are featured in this passage. Paul talks about God's power that has been publicly demonstrated by the resurrection and he prays that we may know the greatness of it. It is because of Christ's resurrection from the dead and his enthronement over the powers that we cannot control but which hold us in bondage - death and evil. We are mortal; we cannot avoid death but death, as we have seen, no longer has the power to end life. We are fallen; we cannot overcome evil. But God in Christ has conquered both, and can, therefore, rescue us from both.

Jesus was raised from the domain of death and promoted to the highest place of honour and supreme authority. Jesus said *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me* (Matthew 28:18). This fulfils the messianic promise of Psalm 110:1 - *The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for my feet.'* These enemies are both powers on earth and in heaven. Jews believed that God had delegated authority over the nations to angelic beings (see Daniel 10:13,20) and that these supernatural powers affected all aspects of life. These include angels and fallen angels, that is demonic powers. The latter being both 'world rulers of this present darkness' and 'spiritual hosts of wickedness.' Jesus is exalted above them all. Even if some are yet to finally concede to his victory, his final victory is still absolutely certain.

### A Prayer

Almighty God, break the power of darkness, let your light shine, your power be revealed and your glory appear among us. May I share in your victory and spend eternity with you.

Wednesday 10th March  
**SPIRITUAL WARFARE**  
Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul describes the cosmic battle that surrounds us against the forces of evil. The reality of demonic forces at work in the world, affecting people's lives and communities, and undermining the witness of Christ's church is a controversial and heavily debated issue. David Watson said, 'I have seen the manifestation of demonic power in the lives of individuals which would make it very hard for me to deny the existence of evil as an intelligent force.' My contention is that we need to understand and consider this whole realm much more intelligently and seriously than we do. 'The church must be more concerned with 'principalities and powers' if she would faithfully save 'flesh and blood'. This is the hardest lesson for the church to learn (Bishop E R Wickham).

There are many places in the Gospels where Jesus is confronted with the powers of darkness manifest in his own temptations and in the illnesses and afflictions of others. We can easily fall into two errors. On the one hand we take the devil too seriously giving him too much power and influence over us and on the other, not take him seriously enough ignoring the existence and reality of spiritual warfare. Paul reminds us that when we think of our enemies and the things that undermine our faith and witness, it is the devil who is the source not other people (v.12). As Jesus defeated the power of the devil on the cross, so we can enter in to his victory - They overcame (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11). That is by testifying to their trust in Christ's finished work on the cross.

- Consider seriously your approach to spiritual warfare.

A Prayer

My enemies, routed and confounded, will suddenly retreat in confusion - Save me, O Lord, for the sake of your love...

Thursday 11th March

## OVERCOMERS

1 John 4:1-6

It has been said that when we come to God in Christ, the devil writes our name down in his book and when we seriously follow Jesus, he underlines it in red ink. If we are seeking God and trying to follow Jesus, the devil, who is the enemy of God, will not want us to be successful. He tries to stop us being converted so that our minds remain blinded to the truth. Paul tells us that, *The God of this age (the devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4). It is God who enables the blind to see.

Paul also tells us that we should not be unaware of the devil's schemes or let Satan outwit us (2 Corinthians 2:11). It is as if the devil uses the same trick on us and we fall for it every time. Jesus tells us that the devil *is a liar and the father of lies* (John 8:44). I have been aware twice that the devil was lying to me. When I was newly converted I heard Satan's voice saying that I would never get away from him. I knew it was a lie because I had been set free in Christ. Recently, I realised that the devil was lying to me about always being too unwell to be able to cope with ministry. The devil uses all sorts of tactics to bring us to ineffectiveness and defeat. But however weak we feel, remember the devil is more afraid of us as Christians trusting in the blood of Christ than we ever should be of him because *the one in you* (that is Christ) is *greater than the one that is in the world* (that is the devil).

- Is there any area of your life where you think that the devil may be lying to you?

### A Prayer

Almighty God, your Son is really risen and has entered the glory of your love. By this victory, I too am sure of victory; may this be my hope and my goal, all the days of my life, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you now and for ever - Amen.

Friday 12th March  
**RESIST THE DEVIL**  
1 Peter 5:8-11

There was once a prince who was a leper but his leprosy was known to very few. When he appeared in public he always wore a large jewel on his forehead, which sparkled in the light of the many lamps in his court. Only when he was alone did he remove the jewel, and his mirror see the leprous spot where the jewel had been. He had devised this means of hiding his condition from the public and covering it up.

A woman went to her pastor wondering why she was not enjoying victory and the devil seemed to be winning in her life. She was directed to James 4:7 - *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* She thought she was resisting the devil but then realised that in order to do this, she had to first submit to God. If we are going to know the victory of Christ, we need to be honest before God and not try to cover up or hide our sin from him. If we are not submitting to God on a particular issue, it is no wonder the enemy of Christ and all Christians will not flee from us. The devil comes to us as a roaring lion (v.8) but sometimes masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). The latter is more difficult to spot than the former. Jesus told us that we are to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). We need to *wash our hands, purify our hearts and humble ourselves before the Lord, so that he will lift us up* (James 4:8-10).

- Is there any area of your life where you are not obeying God which may be giving the enemy a foothold?
- Prayerfully submit that to God (or ask someone to pray with you) and see the devil flee.

A Prayer

Eternal God, you know what is hidden; I lay before you the hardness of my heart. Strengthen me and deliver me from evil through Jesus Christ, our Lord - Amen.

Saturday 13th March  
**DIVINE WEAPONS**  
2 Corinthians 10:3-5

When we come to Christ, we can be under the impression that all our troubles will be over. Martin Lloyd Jones commenting on this misconception wrote, 'People who think that once they are converted all will be happy, have forgotten Satan.' The fourth century monk, Antony of Egypt, spent many years in the desert in prayer battling the forces of evil. 'Demons are always cowardly' was his observation. It is as if the devil and his cohorts are like bullies who easily fold under opposing strength. We do not have that strength in and of ourselves but in Christ, we have the strength to do all things (Philippians 4:13).

From this passage, we learn again that we are not to depend on our own limited human resources to win the victory over our enemies. We actually have three enemies - the world, the flesh and the devil. The devil would have no influence over us or the world no appeal, if it were not for the flesh. By flesh we mean that part of ourselves that loves to sin, to go our own way and put ourselves and our own needs first. The weapons we need to defeat these enemies are not carnal but spiritual. They will pull down all that stands in opposition to God in our lives. We cannot trust in our own intellect, reasoning or imaginations. We can only trust in the supernatural power of God.

- What do you spend your time thinking about/
- Do you take every thought and make it obedient to Christ/
- Do you feel a challenge to your own pride and ability to work things out for yourself?

A Prayer

From the snare of the hunter, deliver me. Cover me with your wings and dispel the darkness of sin and doubt. Pour your light into my heart and give me joy and peace in believing, through Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen.

Sunday 14th March  
**RESCUED FROM WRATH**  
1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

'Envious of us Christians, the demons meddle in everything in their efforts to stop us getting to heaven: they do not want us to make it to the place from which they fell (Antony of Egypt). Satan was the 'morning star' translated in Latin to Lucifer. He was the choirmaster of heaven, the leading archangel. But he wanted to be God and fell from heaven - *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son the the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations* (Isaiah 14:12). When he rebelled, one third of the angels in heaven rebelled with him. The serpent was used in the garden to question God's commandment and this caused Adam and Eve to fall as well (Genesis 3:1-5), so we became cursed and under the devil's dominion. A place of punishment has been prepared for all who rebel against God. In the section of Matthew's Gospel on the sheep and the goats, Jesus talks of the goats on his left to whom he will say Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). By the cross, Jesus has lifted the curse from us - *Christ redeemed us from the curse... by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'* (Galatians 3:13). If our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, we are saved from the punishment that we all deserve (Revelation 20:15) - rescued *from the coming wrath* (v.10).

Three marks of true conversion are given in this passage (v.9):-

1. To turn from idols - i.e. what we worship apart from God.
2. To service God.
3. To look for his coming again.

- Do you know you are saved from this punishment?

A Prayer

O Christ, sanctify me for the coming of your kingdom - Son of the Living God, give salvation, give victory!

Monday 15th March  
**SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM**  
Mark 16:9-20

When Jesus sent out the seventy two evangelists to spread his message throughout Judea, they came back to him really puffed up saying, *Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.* Jesus responded to them saying, *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heave. I have given you authority to trample snakes and scorpions and to overcome the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven* (Luke 10:7-20). Jesus wants his disciples to retain a right perspective of things. It is Jesus who has the power over the enemy, it is he who has won the victory and it is he who sits at the right hand of God the Father (v.19). He promises us, however, that as we go into the world in his name and spread the good news of his Kingdom, he will go with us and to give signs of that Kingdom. These signs are like a kind of preview, a taster of what is to come - a bit like a trailer advertising a forthcoming television programme? They are not given on demand but released in accordance with God's sovereign will.

The Kingdom of God will come on earth in all its fullness, as it is in heaven, at the end of the ages when Jesus returns. At the Ascension, Jesus is taken up into heaven but the promise is given by two angels that, *This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11). Jesus tells us that we will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62).

- Do you believe that Jesus will return in this way?
- How would you feel if he came back today?

A Prayer

Strengthen me in the assurance of final victory, Lord. Fortify me in the hope of your coming - Amen!

Tuesday 16th March  
**SUPERIOR TO ANGELS**  
Hebrews 2:5-9

This passage quotes Psalm 8:4-6 - *What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.* God gave humanity dominion over his creation. This is not a mandate for exploitation that has been the interpretation for so long, but for stewardship and care of what has been made by God and is precious to him. In reality, humanity has dominion over nothing. As William Barclay puts it (in the non-inclusive language of his day!) - 'Man is a creature who is frustrated by his circumstances, defeated by his temptations, girt about by his own weakness. He who should be free is bound; he who would be king is a slave.' As G K Chesterton succinctly put it 'Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain - man is not what he was meant to be.'

This passage shows us the difference that Jesus has made to the sorry state of humanity. Jesus Christ died to recreate us until we become the creatures that we were originally meant to be. The writer to the Hebrews gives us three steps:-

1. He shows us the ideal of what humanity should be - at one with God and masters of the universe.
  2. He shows us the actual state of humanity - frustration instead of mastery, failure instead of glory.
  3. He shows how the actual can be changed into the ideal. This change is achieved by the victory of Jesus Christ.
- Reflect on the state of the world, on the failure of so many people in prominent positions, and on how humanity is not what God meant us to be.

A Prayer

O God our Father, you have given us in Christ a living hope, may your grace work in us all to the end, I pray.

Wednesday 17th March  
**THE BEGINNING**  
Genesis 1:6-31

In the light of yesterday's passage, let us go back to the beginning of the Bible to look again at how things were meant to be. Adam - out of whom God made both male and female (Genesis 2:21, 22) - was given responsibility over what God had created - *God created human beings he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: 'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of earth* (vs.27,28 The Message). The responsibility was not taken away when sin entered God's good creation. Adam was made in God's image and the dominion that have been given by God was not altogether taken away when Adam and Eve fell into sin (see Psalm 8:4-6). But their effectiveness in this role was severely limited by the fall and has been distorted into exploitation and domination resulting in pollution and a ravaging of God given resources. We were made to be responsible stewards and take care of creation. This is what we were originally appointed to do. Humanity has failed miserably.

The full dominion over creation that humanity was meant to enjoy is now exercised only by the man, Jesus Christ. Everything is in subjection to him - he is crowned with glory and honour and everything is put under his feet (Hebrews 2:7,8). Jesus succeeded where Adam (and every human being afterwards) failed.

- How can we, as people in Christ, assume our God given responsibility for the environment?

A Prayer

O Lord, you have begun your reign. You have raised the weakness of my flesh, heal me from my sins and restore me to the full dignity of life and your purposes for all humanity. Amen.

Thursday 18th March  
**THE CREATION WAITS**  
Romans 8:18-25

The victory of Jesus Christ affects not only humanity in restoring it to the original purposes of God but also the whole of creation. The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus has had cosmic significance. When humanity sinned death, decay and corruption entered God's good creation. This principle of sin and its effects is eradicated in Christ. Creation looks to the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God at the end of the ages to be fully liberated from its bondage to decay and brought back into the glorious freedom of the children of God (v.21).

The whole of creation is going to be delivered from the effects of sin, evil and the domination of the devil. This will happen when 'the elements will melt with fervent heat' and the heavens will be on fire. This will mean the end of the present and the exclusion of all sin and evil from the cosmos. The new heaven will come down to earth, (see Revelation 21 and 22). We will live in new resurrection bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-58) on a new earth. We will not be disembodied spirits floating about playing harps on white clouds. Heaven on earth - that is where we will spend eternity. We will live with Christ, the ruler, the victorious King, in the body on this new renewed, renovated, regenerated earth. And we will have work to do for we will reign with him - If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him, (2 Timothy 2:11, 12).

- What should be our outlook now?
- How should we live in the light of this glorious hope?
- What should our state and condition be now?

A Prayer

By Christ's victory, I too am sure of victory; may this be my hope, joy and goal, all the days of my life, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns now and for ever - Amen.

Friday 19th March  
**THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST**  
Colossians 1:10-20

Gustav Aulen, the Swedish theologian, in his book *Christus Victor*, uses the conflict-victory motif to understand the work of Jesus on the cross as Victory. He wrote in the twentieth century where the language of battle and warfare was poignantly resonant. What he had to say, however, was true of every age - 'For my part, I am persuaded that no form of Christian teaching has any future before it except such as can keep steadily in view the reality of evil in the world, and go to meet that evil with a battle song of triumph.' This passage teaches us that in Christ we have been rescued from the rule and authority of evil and been brought under the loving and benevolent rule of God's Son. We can face the evil in the world with a battle song of triumph because Jesus Christ is the head of all things and the One who is over all thrones, powers, rulers or authorities. When we come to God in Christ, a transference takes place. It is a transference from:-

1. Darkness to light.
2. From slavery to freedom.
3. From condemnation to forgiveness.
4. From the power of Satan to the power of God.

It is one of the certain facts of the human mind - a person only thinks as much as they have to. Colossians 1:15-20 are perhaps part of an early Christian hymn on the supremacy of Christ written to counteract false teaching in Colossae. There are many of our songs that do not make us think as much as this one does!

- Take time to meditate over this important portion of Scripture about the total adequacy of Jesus Christ.

A Prayer

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. May grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in life incorruptible. I give thanks to you, O God, Alleluia!

Saturday 20th March  
**CHRIST IS LORD**  
Philippians 2:5-11

The fact that the majority of the world are still under bondage to Satan seems to go unnoticed and ignored. John Masefield in his poem, *The Everlasting Mercy*, has Satan boast, 'He that has not bowed the knee to Christ, has bowed the knee to me.' The fact that most people would deny the existence of Satan leave alone reckon they bow the knee to him goes to show how much humanity is blinded by him to the existence of personified evil before we come to Christ. In this passage, which is also understood to be an early Christian hymn, we see the ultimate victory of Christ - *at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord* (v.10). This is because Jesus humbled himself by becoming human and in obedience to the Father's will, going to the cross. For this reason he has been exalted to the highest place above everyone and everything. We bow the knee to Christ voluntarily here and now out of hearts that overflow with love, thanksgiving, praise and adoration. One day the whole of humanity will have to bow the knee and many will do so out of fear with tears and regret.

Jesus had equal status with God, the Father, but he did not cling to the advantages that brought - Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges to deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless obedient death - and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion (vs.6-8 The Message).

- Is your attitude the same as that of Christ Jesus?
- In what ways is it the same and what ways is it different?

A Prayer

May the God of peace sanctify me and keep me blameless in body, mind and soul - have mercy, Lord!

Sunday 21st March  
**THE MARKS OF CHRIST**  
Galatians 6:7-18

Jesus humbled himself by leaving the glory of heaven, being born a helpless human baby, growing up under the law and dying an horrendous and shameful criminal's death. But now he is raised to glory, exalted to the highest place, the glorious, victorious prince of life - *who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2). The writer to the Hebrews goes on to say that because of all that Jesus endured for us, we should not grow weary or lose heart (Hebrews 12:3).

In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul writes to encourage Christians not to give up. He wants them to retain their trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross, so that nothing else (like circumcision) is needed to make them acceptable to God. He adds his own views as to way some may think otherwise (vs. 12,13)! The only marks of any worth are those that bear a resemblance to the marks of Christ, that is those born of obedient suffering. Paul does not want to draw attention to himself and receive any glory - May I never boast except in the cross (v.14). He knows that his life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) because he says - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

- Are you still alive? Or have you died with Christ to you old way of life?
- Do you know something of sharing in the sufferings of Christ for his sake?

A Prayer

I come to you, O Lord - For you are tenderness and compassion. Show me the way to walk in, for I lift my life to you - Bring me news of your love every morning.

Monday 22nd March

## WHY SCARS?

John 20:24-31

Thomas was not present with the other disciples when Jesus came to them when he stood among them and breathed on them saying, *Receive the Holy Spirit* (John 20:22). Jesus had been raised from the dead. He was the same, yet different. He ate and drank with his disciples to prove he was not a ghost (Luke 24:27-42). But he also appeared suddenly in a locked room (John 20:19) and a week later (v.26) when Thomas was there. What we do know is that to identify himself, Jesus tells Thomas to touch his hands and put his fingers where the nails had been driven through his palms (v.27). He was to put his hand into Jesus' side that had been pierced with the soldiers' spear. This spear had broken a sack of blood and water that had collected around his heart (John 19:34). This can happen medically when it is said that someone dies of a broken heart.

Jesus raised from the dead to glorious resurrection life still bore the scars of his death. We live in the glory of his victory, we receive new glorious resurrection life. He still bears the scars of what it cost to achieve. This begs the questions:- Why didn't God fix him up? Why scars? Why the print of nails that you could feel with your fingers? Why the open wound at his side? We cannot see Christ without seeing the wounds. The resurrected Christ is forever the wounded Christ. Living, but never fixed up. Not bound by death, yet scared for eternity. The deaf have a sign for Jesus. They make this sign often during worship—the middle finger of each hand is placed into the palm of the other. Jesus, the one with wounded hands. And when they touch that place, they remember the One marred forever in beauty and perfection of eternity.

- Can we ever fully appreciate the cost that Jesus paid for our salvation?

### A Prayer

O Risen Christ, you will fulfil your promises. Blessed by your glorious name for ever. Amen.

Tuesday 23rd March  
**TRUE HUMILITY**  
Titus 3:1-11

The early monks and nuns of the Egyptian desert had various sayings such as 'He who loses gold or silver can find more to replace it, but he who loses time cannot find more' - how true of our frenetic lifestyles! They also said, 'I would rather have a defeat with humility than a victory with pride.' What looks like a victory can actually be defeat and what looks like defeat can actually be a victory. When Jesus was dying on the cross, the community leaders mocked him saying - *He saved others but he cannot save himself!... He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now, if he wants him* (Matthew 27:42,43).

Jesus shows us the way to live a life worthy of our calling as the people of God (Ephesians 4:1). Our attitude should be the same as his, one of humble service (Philippians 2:5). In our lives as followers of Jesus we are called to trust God with our hidden victories and our apparent failures. What looked to be the biggest failure of all time as Jesus hung on the cross suffering the abuse of the so-called experts, was actually the instant of momentous victory. What look to be instances of monumental disaster, God can turn to success. The way to victory in the Kingdom of God is the way of the cross. The way of success in following Jesus is in humble service (see Matthew 20:20-28) and a life of goodness, kindness and generosity to all (vs.1,2,8) - even if this is costly. Victory in the Kingdom of God is marked with scars of death.

- What is your view of success - when you come out on top and look good or is it in not defending your own corner and taking the humbler path?

A Prayer

O Lord, you raise the humble. You watch over me and know what I need. May I accept both joys and troubles with a quiet faith and a sure joy, for Jesus' sake - Amen.

Wednesday 24th March  
**THE PRIDE OF LIFE**  
1 John 2:9-17

Richard Baxter, the seventeenth century Puritan wrote - 'Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction to be a true Christian and not humble. All that will be Christians must be Christ's disciples and come to him to learn, and their lesson is the be meek and lowly.'

The opposite of humility is pride. Here we can pick up on a subject of last month's Bible Reading Notes. John tells us this the passage why the world is our enemy - because it appeals to our sinful cravings, our lusts and our pride (v.16). The Message translation spells this out - *Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world - wanting our own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important - has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him.* The world here is not the world of people or the created world but the world, or realm, of sin. The aspect of the world that is controlled by Satan, where systems and philosophies are set up and organised to be in direct opposition to God. This is our enemy. This is the world that we do not belong to and that hates us because it hated Jesus first (John 15:18,19). But Jesus says to all in the world who have trouble - Take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

John is speaking in this passage to those of a different spiritual maturity (vs.13,14). He encourages those new to the faith that they have won a big victory over the evil one. To the more mature, he tells them to stand on their understanding of the Word of God that strengthens them and gives them spiritual vitality to enable them to continue in victory.

A Prayer

Sanctify in love the whole body of your people. Come and revive us. I am sure of your Word!

Thursday 25th March  
**ELEMENTAL SPIRITS**  
Galatians 3:26-4:10

The Apostle Paul is explaining here that the promise God gave to bless all through Abraham is not annulled by the Law given to Moses. The promise was fulfilled in Christ, so that everyone who comes to Christ because they know they cannot keep God's law, inherits the promise that God made to Abraham. The condition of those under the Law before Christ came was like a child who is set to inherit an estate but is too young. This child is the heir but has yet to receive what is promised so is looked after by guardians. In reality the child is little more than a slave under bondage with no liberty until it comes of age.

We are in the same condition. Before we realise our need of Christ and enter into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21), we are *in slavery under the basic principles of this world* (v.3). This means 'elementary ideas belonging to the world' that Paul refers to as *hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ* (Colossians 2:8). Also this verse can be translated as, *in bondage to the elemental spirits of the universe*. These spirits are associated in the ancient world with the physical elements ( earth, fire, air and water) and linked to various festivals (v.10). These are by nature not gods (v.8) i.e. demonic. Satan uses them to deceive people into thinking there is no escape from this fearful bondage. But, at just the right time, God sent his Son to redeem us so that we might receive the long promised inheritance as the Father's heirs (vs. 4-7) sealed by the gift of his Spirit by whom we cry *Abba Father*.

A Prayer

Lord, you have brought me out of the power of darkness into the Kingdom of your dear Son; I rest in the knowledge that I am in the world but not of the world because you reign - Amen!

Friday 26th March  
**OVERCOMING THE WORLD**  
1 John 5:1-12

'The world is like an ocean. In the world we are boats. A boat is only useful in the water: if the boat is in the water, it is useful. If the water is in the boat, it will sink beneath the waves. Therefore bale out the water' - Sadhu Sundar Singh. We are not ruined by living in the world but by the world living in us. We have victory in the Christian life if we overcome the world (V.4). This victory is achieved by obeying God as the old hymn says - 'Trust and obey! For there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.' *Every God-begotten person conquers the world's ways. The conquering power that brings the world to its knees is our faith. The person who wins out over the world's ways is simply the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God* (The Message vs. 4-5).

Walking in victory is walking in obedience to God and not in accordance with the sinful patterns of this world. Is this really possible, I hear you ask? Such obedience is not impossible for the believer because we have been born again (John 3:7), and the Holy Spirit lives in us and with us (John 14:17), to strengthen us and equip us with everything we need (2 Corinthians 9:8). God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The gift of the Holy Spirit to us is a seal marking our ownership to God and it acts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come (Ephesians 1:13). John speaks of two aspects of victory:-  
The initial victory of turning in faith from the world to God.  
The continuing day-by-day victory of Christian living.  
We are therefore able to *Be bold and be strong*, as the song says, *and walk in faith and victory because the Lord our God is with us.*

- Is there a step of obedience you need to take?

A Prayer

You fill the whole world, O Spirit of Power! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Saturday 27th March  
**PERFECT LOVE**  
Romans 12:9-21

An American firm of committed Christians made tents and all sorts of camping stuff. They advertised by sending out catalogues with their products as - 'A good bargain' with 'A better bargain - The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' written underneath, and 'Excellent covers - strong and durable' then below 'A better covering still - Blessed is the person whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' May we too never be lacking in zeal but always keep our spiritual fervour, serving the Lord (v.11).

We have sought to identify our enemies - the world, the flesh (our old sinful nature) and the devil and seen how Jesus Christ has won the victory over all and how we too can live in his victory and overcome these enemies. The best way to live in this victory without being defeated by our sins, lusts and pride or demonic influence and temptation or the world's luring siren song is to displace the bad with the good. Robert Barclay, the seventeenth century Quaker, wrote of this principle of displacement - 'I have found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up.' Paul encourages the Roman Christians - *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (v.21). As John puts it - *God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God in them. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear* (1 John 4:16,18).

- How can you demonstrate your love for God?
- In what way can you show this love through you to others?

A Prayer

Take heart, take courage once more, all who hope in the Lord!  
I rely on you, Lord. Smile on your servant with the light of your love.  
My time is in your hand. Your love, Lord, rests on me - As my hope is in you - Amen.

Sunday 28th March  
**MORE THAN CONQUERORS**  
Romans 8:28-39

It is told of Hannibal that when he came, in utter amazement and grief into the presence of his father who had been crucified by the Romans, he lifted up his hand before that Roman cross and swore by all the gods that he would fight to the death that power that had crucified his father. The Christian's conflict is with sin and Satan in the light of the cross, and in all these things *we are more than conquerors through him that loved us* (v.37).

The whole of the eighth chapter of Romans must be one of the most wonderful in Scripture, especially this end part that serves as a climax to all Paul is saying about the final perseverance of the saints. Despite our weakness, our gullibility and our susceptibility to our powerful enemies, we are able to stand up to them! They wear us down mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually but in the midst of this kind of severe trial and testing, Paul gives us the answer. Firstly, by way of a question - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (v.35). This is not our love of Christ but his love for us. This love is like a magnet that has taken hold of us, it holds us fast to him. Who can pull us away from him? Is anything strong enough to do that? - No, because it is not our love that holds us but Jesus' love for us. Paul reminds us that Jesus is now in heaven interceding for us (v.34, see Hebrews 7:25). Christ's love to us and his power holds us and guarantees our perseverance and our victory. Nothing - no state, no form of evil, earthly or spiritual power, distance or time - can separate us from that love because it is his love and it is an all-powerful love.

- God is for you, who can be against you? He is on your side.

### A Prayer

In you are the ends of time, and you come and set us free! Keep all who have found you rooted in your love - may I live this day in joy and praise.

Monday 29th March  
**THE FRUITS OF VICTORY**  
Ephesians 2:1-10

Bob Light was addicted to heroin for twenty-seven years. During that time he said, 'The needle had become the main focus of my life. Every two hours, I needed to put a needle in my arm for a release. Heroin took me to mental hospitals, rehab centres and even a padded cell in prison. My life was a living hell. I hated myself. I seemed to destroy everything I touched. I didn't care if I died. I didn't believe it was possible to live without drugs.' This man was under the bondage of addiction and listening to the lies of the enemy. But, one day, he met a man who offered him a place to stay. He was an evangelist who told him about Jesus. He went to church and was received with love. Jesus showed him that he was not worthless and eventually he broke free from his addiction. He said, 'Jesus has been restoring everything to me that I lost.' *God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead (v.4)!*

Through our union with Christ in his victory, we can enjoy a victorious Christian life. God restores to us our wasted years - the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25). And he gives us a glorious future - *'I have plans for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'* (Jeremiah 29:11). This future will entail us being raised up with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms (v.6). This is so that in ages to come, God can put us on display, like exhibiting a precious antique. In this way, he shows his mighty power, the extent of his grace and what he can make out of broken, weak and failed vessels like us. Our loving, creator God wants to show us off as examples of his creation, like a master potter revealing their most prized ceramics.

A Prayer

Lord, you reign over all things to the ends of the earth. By this victory, we too are sure of victory, through Jesus Christ - Amen.

Tuesday 30th March  
**THE GLORIOUS VICTOR**  
Revelation 19:11-21

This is highly graphic and emotive language used as a vehicle for the apocalyptic literature of the book of Revelation. In his vision, John sees not only through a door to heaven, but heaven itself. The rider that John sees is the Lord Jesus riding on a white horse returning as Warrior-Messiah-King. Gone are the days when he rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, that humble almost comical beast of burden (Matthew 21:6). He is called *Faithful and true* (v.11). Jesus is coming to judge and to make war. He judges righteously and his garment is sprinkled with blood (v.13), either the blood of his enemies or his own blood that he shed to atone for sin. He is revealed as a Mighty Warrior who uses his sword to carry out the sentence of Almighty God. There is no question of the outcome of the battle. The victory over the beast and the false prophet is certain and so is his victory over all in opposition to him.

This symbolic language is a little difficult to stomach and should be understood in the context of the formulas and images of this genre of literature. To see Jesus as the victorious King of Kings and Lord of Lords is entirely accurate but this should not be used as a mandate to use force. These images have been misinterpreted at times in history to legitimise the subjugation of whole races. But Jesus is both conqueror and liberator. It is in his victory that all humanity can be set free.

- Jesus is called the word of God and wields a double edged sword. Think about the power of God's Word in the light of Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12.
- God's word is our weapon of warfare against our enemies. Why don't we use it more?

A Prayer

More mighty than armour, the Lord is beside me. I will not fear the terrors of the night, the Lord is beside me.

Wednesday 31st March  
**THE FINAL VICTORY**  
Revelation 20:1-6

Ireneaus was a second century theologian, born in Smyrna in Asia Minor (modern day Ismir in Turkey), who became Bishop of Lyons (c.130-202). He saw that Christ, fully man and fully God, retraced the steps of Adam, with a different result - 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, of his boundless love, became what we are that he might make us what he himself is. As through a conquered man our race went down to death, so through a conqueror we ascend to life.' In the year 177, the church in Lyons was completely wiped out in the persecution of Marcus Aurelius. Forty-seven Christians were put to death in a variety of ways - some were beheaded, some were flogged, all were tortured. One had their eyes gouged out, one had molten lead poured down their throat and another was forced to sit on a red hot chair so they were roasted to death. All refused to abandon their faith.

This passage sets out the scene of the final struggle leading to the final victory of God. There are different interpretations but what is clear is that those who have shown a special loyalty to Christ will be shown a special privilege (v.4). There are also privileges for all who have been true to Christ:-

1. Death has been vanquished. Physical death is not to be feared because it is the gateway to eternal life.
  2. They become priests of God and of Christ with the twofold privilege of receiving the right of free entry into the presence of God and of bringing and introducing others to Jesus.
  3. They are to reign with Christ. They are given Jesus' royalty. In Christ, the most ordinary person becomes a king.
- Thank God that we do not live in days of such persecution.
  - Can we be sure we will never face it?

A Prayer

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ - Amen.