

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday
 Bible Study..... 9:00 A.M.
 Worship 10:00 A.M.
 Training Class5:00 P.M.
 Worship.....6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:
 Bible Study 7:00 P.M.



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They Did Not Love Their Lives
by Robert Harkrider

Is this about people who are unhappy and miserable with life? Quite the contrary. It is about people who, like all faithful Christians, had a perspective of life that gave them a peace that surpasses understanding. This title is found in Rev. 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.” Yes, they were willing to die if need be, and they could do so with joy in their hearts! Their attitude epitomizes the theme and purpose for which Revelation was written.

Revelation is a message to God’s people of certain victory! It was written during a period of severe persecution that continued off and on for almost two hundred years after it was written. The saints were assured that God’s kingdom would stand forever, and even if they personally should die, they would still gain victory through Christ. The Greek word translated overcame (nikao) literally means “to gain the victory, to prevail, to conquer.” The climax and crowning glory of these visions are revealed in 17:14 when the enemies of the Lord are gathered in battle against the Lord: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

The main purpose of Revelation is to encourage Christians to be steadfast in the midst of persecutions. To the human eye the conflict seemed to be the

Roman Empire versus the church; however, the real struggle was between God and Satan. The principal characters are introduced in chapter twelve where the Radiant Woman gives birth to the Man Child. Satan, depicted as the Great Red Dragon, stood ready to devour the child when He was born. Having failed to destroy this child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Christ), Satan knew his time was limited (12:12). So with great wrath he persecutes the woman (12:13) and makes war with the remnant of her seed (12:17). He gives power to two earthly agents described in chapter 13, the Beast out of the Sea (political power) and the Beast out of the Earth (false religion). With these allies of Satan opposing God's people it appeared that Satan had the upper hand. Will the church be abolished? Why do the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer? These questions no doubt were on the hearts of the saints, and the answers were revealed in this book.

Why should anyone choose a course that meant persecution? All who understood the message of this book knew why. They looked beyond the present. To have patience in the midst of trials, one must look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen (2 Cor. 4:16-18). First, they were assured that the persecuting power would be brought down (13:9-10). All who had the mark of the beast had a symbolic number (666), which was short of the perfect divine number (7). Therefore they would experience failure upon failure upon failure (13:18). Most importantly, the saints understood that those who die in the Lord do not "lose," but instead "gain" a far better reward than this entire world combined (14:12-13).

How then did they gain the victory? Three things are stated. They overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb (12:11). These first century Christians were men and women just like we are. They had weaknesses; they knew sorrows and disappointments just like we do. They too were sinners. But they were forgiven of sins by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). Baptism is the means by which we apply His blood. The Bible explains that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death (Romans 6:3-5). Without obedient faith, his blood saves no one. Consider 1 Peter 1:18-19 with 1 Peter 1:22-23. We purify our souls by obeying. His blood was given to wash away (loose) our sins (Rev. 1:5). This is the same language used in describing the purpose of baptism: Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins (Acts 22:16).

They also overcame him by the word of their testimony (12:11). Their lives demonstrated their faith. Theirs was not a silent, embarrassed, ashamed

stand. They knew in whom they trusted. Not only did their tongues confess Christ, but their lives demonstrated their testimony (Phil. 2:15-16). These were not tired or bored Christians who reluctantly dragged themselves into a form of worship once a week. One would envision them to be full of zeal and fervor, for their lives depended on the stand they took. If they were willing to die for Christ surely they demonstrated the warmth of living that goes with having correct values for life. Christ was in first place in all their choices!

Finally, they overcame him...because they loved not their lives unto the death (12:11). Commitment to Christ meant giving all they had, even their lives. Jesus said that he that loves his life will lose it (John 12:25; cf. Matt. 10:39; 16:25.). This is not a pessimistic, fatalistic approach to life, nor does it mean that a Christian is not to enjoy this life. But it does embody the fact that their values for life were such that they understood what was worth living for and/or dying for! By dying, they lived! They believed that in the world to come the tabernacle of God will be with men (21:1-7). Many have spent great sums of money for the fountain of youth, but God holds it out freely to all who will come to Him. In symbolic language God says, "Heaven is a place of perfect fellowship, perfect protection, perfect provisions of needs, and perfect service to God."

Is the message of Revelation relevant today? ABSOLUTELY! We must make the same choice they did—either live for NOW (this world) or the NOWAFTER (heaven). It is true that we do not face the same type of persecution they did. Whereas some of them were persecuted to physical death, many today are petted to spiritual death! Their choice was more clearly defined because if they chose the "Nowafter" they knew it meant persecution. Our choice today is more difficult to define because we live in a time of peace and prosperity that entices a nominal, convenient form of Christianity. Satan failed to turn Christians away from the Lord through persecution. Today, he is petting us to spiritual death with material riches and pleasures. How many are "too busy" with respectable things of this world to serve the Lord with total commitment? (Luke 14:15-24).

What then is the relevant message of Revelation? Do not measure success by material possessions. What the eye can see and the hand can hold in this world is not the true gauge. Hope is the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19). Remember who you are and where you are going. And be counted in the number who did not love their lives.