

## ***Growing in Christ***

### ***Victory over Evil Forces***

Lesson #6 for November 10, 2012

Scriptures: Ephesians 1:18-22; Romans 8:26-39; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:6-10; Luke 10:1-20; Acts 5:12-16.

1. This lesson will focus on how Christians are to claim victory in Christ.
2. When Jesus sent out His disciples on each of their various missionary trips—there were three that we know about in Galilee and one in Perea—He gave them power over demonic forces and power to heal the sick and even to raise the dead. Why don't we have more information about exactly what they accomplished? (John 21:25)
3. Should we be performing more miracles today? How should we relate to those who claim miracle-working power? Television evangelists perform a "miracle" and then suggest that since they have been able to perform that miracle, they must have a direct connection with God. They imply that, therefore, whatever else they say must be the truth! Are they correct?
4. What does victory in Christ actually mean? Is there a relationship between claiming victory and actually being victorious? As they pass through the seven last plagues, will the 144,000 claim victory? What is the relationship between claiming victory and actually being victorious?
5. Is this talking about victory over sin? Or, victory over demons? Or, demonic forces? Could we ever say, "Satan has no power over me"? (John 14:30, *GNB*) Is it talking about victory over the challenges we face every day in our busy lives? Is Christianity intended to be a solution to the problems of everyday life? As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we should be constantly aware of the fact that our minds are the battleground in the great controversy. We are not just dealing with forces and powers here on this earth. We are dealing with universe-wide issues.
6. Let us make no mistake. God has already won the great controversy. That was accomplished by Christ 2000 years ago. Does that mean that Satan is a defeated foe? As you take on the challenge of temptations and problems in your own life, does it seem like Satan is a defeated foe? How can we preserve ourselves from Satan's attacks?
7. We know that the great controversy is a battle for minds. The basic question is, "Who is and has been telling us the truth?" Who should we trust? Was God telling us the truth when He said that sin leads to death? (Genesis 2:17) Almost the very first words out of Satan's mouth here on this earth were his accusation that God is a liar! (Genesis 3:1-5)
8. Do we live as if we believed God's factual statement that sin leads to death? Do we recognize on a daily basis the truth of Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:18-22: The same power which raised Christ from the dead is at work in us? Now, Christ is at God's right hand, ruling over all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords. So, what power was it that raised Christ from the dead? It was His own divinity! (John 10:18; John 2:18,19; *DA* 785.2; *5BC* 1113.6) Does the fact that Christ has conquered all make it easier for you to deal with temptation?
9. In the great controversy, there are two sides. Satan is constantly tempting us and then throwing our mistakes back at us and at God, claiming that we do not deserve heaven. (Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 12:10-12) But, we can take hope from Romans 8:26-39. In

his marvelous climax to his explanation of the plan of salvation, Paul stated in these few verses that all three Members of Godhead are on our side. Furthermore, if we accept Their help and if we are willing to let Them work in our lives, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Are the angels in heaven being tempted even today?

10. Read Romans 8:29,30. There has been a conflict down through history over issues regarding predestination. But these verses should not trouble us because the word for *predestination* in Greek in these passages is *pro-horizo*. Its basic meaning suggests that God sets horizons for us at the time we are born. When we are born, our race is already determined. Our gender is already determined. As we grow up in a certain culture and language group, those factors are already determined. Thus, a horizon is set for us beyond which we cannot go. Some may believe that they are predestined to be lost. They may believe that the circumstances of their birth and life have been so bad that it is impossible to overcome them. Those people need to read and reread the following passages.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. (DA 668.3)

**Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (DA 671.2)**

11. We all need to consider the meaning of these passages. None of us has an excuse for not making any progress in the Christian life. The best help in the universe is available to us if we recognize it and claim it and allow God to work in us.
12. James, Jesus' older stepbrother, said in James 4:7, *GNB*: "So then, submit to God. Resist the Devil, and he will run away from you." What is the best way for us to resist the Devil? One of the very important lessons we need to learn about dealing with temptation is to exercise that power at the very beginning of the temptation. The morbidly obese overeater should not first be thinking about resisting temptation with a donut already in his hand. The alcoholic should not first be thinking about giving up alcohol while sitting at the bar. We need to learn to resist the very first inclinations of temptation. We need to take a very firm stand (the meaning of *resist* in James 4:7) against the Devil. If your worries are getting you down, remember that Moses was once a "basket case"!
13. Read 1 Peter 5:6-10. It is scary to think that the Devil is going about like a roaring lion. But, Peter assured us that we should leave our worries to God who will help us to resist the Devil. He will help us with firmness, strength, and a sure foundation if we give Him the opportunity. By contrast, we must never give the Devil an opportunity. (Ephesians 4:27) A large research study done in Spain recently discovered that whereas red wine has been touted as improving the health of one's heart, it works best if the alcohol is removed!
14. Peter wrote his two letters late in his ministry when he was probably already suffering persecution. As we know, he was eventually imprisoned in that hollowed-out rock prison known as the *Mamertine* prison and eventually crucified upside down in Rome. Through all of that, he encouraged those who are suffering.

15. Read Matthew 10:1-8; Mark 6:7,12,13; Luke 9:1,2; 10:1-20. As we noted earlier in these examples, Jesus clearly gave His disciples the power to drive out demons, heal the sick, heal various diseases, cleanse lepers, even raise the dead. In Luke 10:18-20, (compare Luke 15:7,10) the 72 disciples came back rejoicing that the demons obeyed them. What did Jesus mean when He said on that occasion, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"? If we are to gain the victory over Satan in this period of our earth's history, should we be performing exorcisms to prove it? Are there demons that we face that need to be cast out? If we are doing what God wants us to do, we must recognize that Satan will do whatever he can to oppose us.
16. While he was hidden away in the Wartburg Castle, Martin Luther chose to translate the New Testament from Greek into German. It is reported that on one occasion while he was there, the Devil appeared to him in his room and tried to frighten him. Luther took an ink bottle and threw it at him. While ink bottles are probably not dangerous to demons, Luther apparently recognized the very real presence of the Devil. Surely, the Devil recognized what would be accomplished if Luther succeeded in finishing his work on the German translation of the Bible. Are we able to recognize the presence of the Devil in our lives?
17. What is the key to victory over the Devil? In His last evening with His disciples, Jesus promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then He went on to explain a lot of things about what the Holy Spirit would be able to do with them if they were willing to cooperate with Him. (John 14-16) Do those promises still apply to us? (John 17:20-26)
18. We know what the ultimate result was. When Jesus was crucified, the disciples were in terror, hiding behind locked doors in the upper room for fear that they would be next. But, when they realized that Jesus had risen from the dead and it began to dawn on them that the One that they had spent all that time with was, in fact, fully God, a tremendous transformation took place in their thinking. They came together, no longer fighting for the first position in an earthly kingdom, but as brothers and sisters claiming victory in Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. When the early rain was poured out during Pentecost in Jerusalem, the results were evident.
19. Ever after that, the disciples had the capacity to speak any language, the capacity to heal any disease, and even the capacity to raise people from the dead. Peter did it, (Acts 9:36-42) and so did Paul. (Acts 20:9-12) Paul, who was not there on that occasion but later became the most outstanding apostle of all, demonstrated his power to cast out demons in Philippi. (Acts 16:16-18) It is interesting to note that on that occasion the demon-possessed woman called Paul and Silas "servants of the most high God." (*Elyon*) It is possible that on that occasion she was referring to one of the Canaanite gods who was called *Elyon* (The Most High).
20. Apparently, Peter and John became so famous in Jerusalem for their capacity to heal the sick and cleanse lepers that—as we read in Acts 5:12-16—people would line the sick along the streets where they thought Peter would pass in hopes that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of the sick people and make them well. Do you think anyone was actually healed by Peter's shadow? (Compare Acts 19:11,12)
21. How do you think the members of the Sanhedrin responded when they saw people lying in the streets and hoping Peter would pass by after they had denied Peter's ability to heal the sick? Remember that they had forbidden Peter and John to even speak in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:18-21)
22. It is interesting to observe that the Christians were not afraid to meet in the temple

courtyard. They met in a place called Solomon's Porch. (Acts 5:12) As they fellowshiped together and listened to various people speak, many were added to their group.

23. Is it important for us to recognize Satan's power? Do we need to study how he tempts people? What are Satan's most successful temptations? Pride, wealth, power, etc.
24. While we may need to have some knowledge of Satan's activities, it is far more important for us to recognize how Christ overcame him. And we can do the same.
25. Read Galatians 5:19-23. These verses tell us about the results of Satan's work in contrast with the results of the fruit of the Holy Spirit which it is possible to have in our lives. Many Christians believe that they must pray for the Holy Spirit to take control of their lives. But, there are several problems with that approach. If you pray for the Holy Spirit to take control of your life and you continue to sin, are you going to blame the Holy Spirit for your sins? And how can you know for sure it is not Satan who is actually taking control of your life?
26. Furthermore, it is very interesting to note that the last portion of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. God does not want to take us into heaven as robots which He controls like puppets on strings. He can only admit to heaven people who have learned the truth well enough and understand God well enough so they choose to do what is right because it is right. Thus, when the Holy Spirit has finished His work, He can step aside, and we will exercise our self-control in the right way. Read again *Desire of Ages* 668.3 as above in Item #10.
27. In 1 Peter 3-5, Peter spoke a great deal about suffering. Once again, we are reminded that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." (Read 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11) Paul added that all who live godly lives will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12) We live at a time and a place in history when persecution is almost unheard of. Is that because we are not living godly lives? Compare Paul's life. (2 Corinthians 11:16-29)
28. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-17. Paul assured us that these temporary afflictions, however bad they may seem to us at the time, "will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17, *GNB*) This is the truth to which Christians can always look forward. We need to live as if we really believe it. God has not promised us a comfortable, easy life here on this earth where Satan is busy. In fact, Scripture suggests that the closer we are to God and living the Christian life, the more trouble we may have. But isn't it worth it?

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Last Modified: October 11, 2012

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