

Who do You Say that I Am? Part II

*Christ the Conqueror*

I Corinthians 15:20-28

Sermon

*Hobart, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

© *Phillip C. Hopwood, 2013*

## **I Corinthians 15:20-28**

<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

<sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

<sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

<sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

<sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For he “has put everything under his feet.”<sup>a</sup> Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

<sup>28</sup> When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>a</sup> Psalm 8:6

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (1 Co 15:20). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

## INTRODUCTION:

### I. TODAY;

#### A. WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO LOOK AT THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTION FOR OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH; WHO IS JESUS?

1. We are looking at particular aspects of who Jesus is, and who he isn't
2. Examining some of the popular religious images people have had of Christ down through the years
  - a) And seeking to gain a clearer image of him, and thus a clearer view of God
  - b) Remembering that we are made in his image, and called to share in his divine nature, not to make him in our image

#### B. DOUGLAS HALL

1. points out how such views, or "images" we hold of Jesus will affect our witness of him to the world;

As we picture the Christ, the central figure of our faith, so we shall conduct ourselves as Christians in the world. The world will be the recipient of our imaging of Jesus--the good or ill.<sup>2</sup>

2. So if we have a distorted view of Jesus, our faith and lives will reflect it.

#### C. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT AN IMAGE OF JESUS THAT HAS BEEN COMMON DOWN THROUGH THE AGES

1. The picture and focus on *Jesus as Conqueror*
2. We are going to look at what is helpful about this concept, and what may be misleading about it

#### D. PRAYER

<sup>2</sup> Douglas John Hall, *We Would See Jesus*, The Living Pulpit, Inc., 2000

## BODY:

### II. THE *CONQUERING JESUS*

#### A. IT IS A NATURAL HUMAN TENDENCY TO FORM AN IMAGE OF GOD IN OUR MIND THAT SUITS OUR NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

1. To make God in our own image or accept someone else's image of him
2. One of those images, especially in the past, and particularly during times of political turmoil and war, Christians have focused on Jesus as the Conquering King
  - a) The divine warrior and victor over the enemies of God and his people
3. This image is often tied in with many of the Old Testament stories of military conquests
4. It was also a predominant image the people of Jesus' time had of the Messiah; a conquering warrior king and deliverer

#### B. WE HAVE HYMNS FROM RELATIVELY RECENT TIMES THAT REFLECT THIS;

1. That liken Jesus and his people as an army conquering that which lies in front of them
2. E.g., *Onward Christian Soldiers*

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
with the cross of Jesus going on before.  
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;  
forward into battle see his banners go!
3. The NT does use military analogies itself on occasion,
  - a) Such as fighting the good fight of faith,
  - b) And putting on God's armor

4. Jesus is indeed our King, and will come and take his rightful place as King of Kings and Lord or Lord's in the future

**C. SO IN WHAT SENSE IS THIS IMAGE OF JESUS AS CONQUEROR ACCURATE AND HELPFUL?**

1. And in what ways can it be misleading and distorting?

2. Douglas Hall writes;

Sometimes the religious fascination with our Lord's divinity combines with the more political idea of divine sovereignty to produce a picture of Jesus as conqueror.

As a child in Sunday school, I was occasionally obliged to sing a hymn whose opening line announced, "O the world must be conquered for Christ." I no longer recall the words that followed, but the tune is indelibly fixed in my mind. It is stirring and military.

While the mentality that fastens upon the divine Jesus lures some away from this world, the picture of Jesus as heroic victor, captain or king moves the faithful towards this world--with military intent! This ancient, Christocratic ideal is still very much with us.

Since Constantine first envisaged its power ("In this sign conquer!"), this conquering Christ has been inextricably bound up with imperialistic societies; and the United States is perhaps the greatest empire in recorded history. It is not accidental that the most "conservative" forms of Christianity and the most "conservative" forms of America-first politics are so closely linked today.

Imaging Jesus Christ as victor belongs to the most ancient strands of Christian thought. But what sort of victory do we have in mind? Over whom or what is this victory achieved? As someone once remarked, the trouble is that we are always giving to God what belongs to Caesar!

If power is an appropriate attribute of God at all; if conquering can ever be associated legitimately with Jesus Christ, then we had better be clear that the power and the victory under discussion are a most unusual type. At the top of the list of what must be conquered by the Christ is surely our own need to conquer everything and everybody, and the concomitant fear of our own vulnerability!

3. What I think Hall is saying here is;

- a) That Christians need to be careful not to dress Jesus in our own political or power seeking garb.
  - b) Not to use him as the flag and rallying point for our own narrow political agendas
  - c) Not to act as if Jesus is siding with our country alone, or our side of politics, or our pet crusades, and claiming he is the conquering champion who is going to destroy those who oppose what we stand for
  - d) As humans we all feel vulnerable at times, and we may feel that our country, the causes we are most emotionally concerned about are under fire and under threat
  - e) And it is natural to want to see things from an us versus them viewpoint
  - f) To become adversarial, and start seeing things from a war like mentality
    - (1) **And always insisting “that we have God on our side”**
    - (2) **That we are in the right**
    - (3) **And that God agrees with us, and our desires, and our fight against others who disagree**
    - (4) **We have Jesus as our Conquering King, and we will march behind him and attack and defeat these unclean hordes who dare oppose our point of view**
4. As Hall brings out,
- a) This ties in with the distorted idea of dualism we looked at last time
  - b) Viewing everything in the world as evil, and seeing Jesus and his church as being at war with everything in the world
  - c) This also goes together with the “holy temple” view of the church
5. The religious teachers and authorities of Jesus’ day took this “us and them” approach
- a) Look at how they fought Jesus
  - b) They even roped in the enemy, the Romans in order to arrest Jesus and have him crucified
  - c) And they thought they had God on their side!
6. But how did Jesus respond?

- a) Not by calling down the armies of heaven to destroy them
  - b) He told his disciples not to resort to the sword, saying, "My kingdom is not of this world"
7. In other words, Jesus' victory, the way God brings about victory is not the way the kingdoms of men go about it
- 

### III. TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUE NATURE OF JESUS' CONQUERING ROLE WE SHOULD LOOK AT THE CROSS

#### A. WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF JESUS' BATTLE

1. What did he fight for and why?
2. What did he conquer, what did he win victory over?
3. How did he conquer it?

#### Philippians 2:5-16

##### *Christ's Humility and Exaltation*

<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup>Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. <sup>7</sup>He made himself nothing;\* he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.\*

4. Jesus didn't fight for his own rights, he didn't demand recognition or honour
  - a) He didn't use his power to crush or discourage
  - b) He came to conquer the sins and rebelliousness of our hearts and minds through the greatest act of sacrificial love
5. He won victory by repairing our broken relationship with God on the cross

<sup>8</sup>And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus

---

\* *Philippians 2:7a* Or He laid aside his mighty power and glory.

\* *Philippians 2:7b* Greek and was born in the likeness of men and was found in appearance as a man.

every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

6. God has given him the ultimate honour and the position of King and Judge, because he uses his position to humbly serve God's cause of justice and the healing and restoring of his people and his creation

## **B. JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE CONQUEROR OF THE ULTIMATE PROBLEM**

1. But he conquers in love, with love
2. He conquers all that stands against God and his love not by military might, superior force and ungodly human methods of fighting
3. He conquers by entering into our lives, and taking all the injustices, pain and brokenness of our world upon himself, and nailing it to his cross, burying it in his grave
4. He conquers through the Father resurrecting him to sit at his right hand as the Lord of all
  - a) Bringing man and God into communion, bringing union, peace and communion, having overcome all that had separated us and drawn us away from and opposed God and his love

## **C. THOMAS TORRANCE DESCRIBES THIS VICTORY OF GOD**

1. The way Jesus is Conqueror over our real enemies

In the incarnate life of Jesus, and above all in his death, God does not execute his judgement on evil simply by smiting it violently away by a stroke of his hand, but by entering into it from within, into the very heart of the blackest evil, and making its sorrow and guilt and suffering his own.

And it is because it is God himself who enters in, in order to let the whole of human evil go over him, that his intervention in meekness has violent and explosive force. It is the very power of God.

And so the cross with all its incredible meekness and patience and compassion is no deed of passive and beautiful heroism simply,



but the most potent and aggressive deed that heaven and earth have ever known;

the attack of God's holy love upon the inhumanity of man and the tyranny of evil upon all the piled up contradiction of sin.<sup>3</sup>

2. That is the true nature of the Jesus who indeed conquers all that hurts and harms our relationship with God and one another

a) Though he is indeed a "conqueror" he is not at all like any images we have in our minds of human conquerors

**D. JURGEN MOLTMANN DISCUSSES HOW OVEREMPHASISING CERTAIN PICTURES AND TITLES FOR JESUS CAN DISTORT OUR IMAGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF CHRIST;**

For a long time the Christological titles for Christ, such as Lord or King, were so much stressed in Christianity that his lowly status on this earth could be overlooked. It is only recently that there has come to be a widespread experience of *Christ as our brother* on our path through life, and our companion in the sufferings of this present time.... He is beside us, and goes ahead of us as one of ourselves.

...Christ brings fellowship to people who are humiliated, persecuted, assailed and murdered just as he was himself. His cross stands between the unnumbered crosses which line the paths of the perpetrators of violence on this earth.

His cross stands in brotherly fashion ...as a sign that God participates in our suffering and takes our pain on himself. The 'suffering Christ' has so much become one of many that all the uncounted and unnamed, forsaken and tortured men and women are his brothers and sisters.

The fellowship of Christ is experienced not only as the fellowship of the humiliated Christ with us, but also as our fellowship with the Christ who was raised from the dead and exalted into the future Glory. The son of Man who finds us when we are lost takes us with him on his way to God's future. We experience this other side of Christ when we feel the energies of life and are born again to a living hope.

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, Robert T. Walker, editor; Paternoster/IVP Academic, Milton-Keynes, UK, 2008, p. 150

Then we see this deathly world in the light of Christ's resurrection, and in the vital powers of the Spirit, receive "the powers of the world to come" (Heb 6:5).

....Original and true Christianity is a *movement of hope* in this world, which is often so arrogant and yet so despairing. That also makes it a *movement of healing* for sick souls and bodies. And not least, it is a *movement of liberation* for life, in opposition to the violence which oppresses the people.

If God's Spirit puts people on 'the path of life', that means *the path of righteousness*. In the Christian New Testament it is also called *the path of love*, which binds together justice and mercy.

This love, hard though it is in practice, is the royal path of life. 'He who abides in love abides *in God* and *God abides in him*' (1 John 4:16), for 'God is love.'

### **E. THIS VIEW OF JESUS AS FELLOW SUFFERER, HEALER AND LIBERATOR FROM SUFFERING**

1. Leads to a different view of the Christian life, and the role of the church than one focusing more exclusively on Jesus as a conquering warrior of those we see as our enemies

---

## **IV. JESUS AS CONQUEROR IN OUR LIVES**

### **Romans 6:4-13**

<sup>4</sup> For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

<sup>5</sup> Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was.

<sup>6</sup> Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

<sup>7</sup> For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

1. Through and in Jesus, we have been freed from the past, from the power of sin
  - a) From living apart from God
2. We have been united with him, brought into fellowship and partnership with him

<sup>8</sup> And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life.

<sup>9</sup> We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. <sup>10</sup> He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God.

<sup>11</sup> So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Do not let sin control the way you live;<sup>\*</sup> do not give in to its lustful desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.

## **B. ROMANS 8:31-39 SHOWS THAT WE ARE “MORE THAN CONQUERORS” THROUGH JESUS**

<sup>31</sup> What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? <sup>32</sup> Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. <sup>34</sup> Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

<sup>35</sup> Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? <sup>36</sup> (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”)

<sup>37</sup> No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

vse 37 NIV and other versions;

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>4</sup>

---

\* **Romans 6:12** Or *Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.*

\* Ps 44:22.

<sup>4</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Ro 8:37). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

NLT

<sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,\* neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **C. WHAT IS IT THAT JESUS GIVES US VICTORY OVER?**

1. V 38 Those things that separate us from God and his love
2. That is what the true battle of life is all about
  - a) That is where we and all mankind need Jesus as Conqueror
3. Jesus' victory overcomes all that opposes life, within ourselves, and in the world around us
4. It brings us back to God, back to the real life we were created for

### **I John 5:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> For every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory.  
<sup>5</sup> And the ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

### **Colossians 2:8-3:4**

<sup>8</sup> Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world,\* and not from Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body

5. It is through Jesus, God became human, fully one of us, one with us, that he is our Conqueror, overcoming those things that stand between us and our life with God

<sup>9</sup> For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body,\* <sup>10</sup> and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe.

---

\* Greek *nor rulers*.

\* *Colossians 2:8* Or *from the basic principles of this world*; also in 2:20.

<sup>11</sup> When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature. <sup>12</sup> For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

<sup>13</sup> You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. <sup>14</sup> He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross. <sup>15</sup> In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

<sup>v20</sup> You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the evil powers of this world. So why do you keep on following rules of the world, such as, <sup>21</sup> “Don’t handle, don’t eat, don’t touch.” <sup>22</sup> Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them.

<sup>23</sup> These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline.

But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person’s evil thoughts and desires.

#### *Living the New Life*

**3** Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. <sup>2</sup> Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> And when Christ, who is your\* real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

### **D. SO WE SEE THAT IN JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

1. The ultimate victory here is over evil
2. over everything that separates us from God, over evil thoughts and desires, over everything that is contrary to God’s life and kingdom of peace and love

---

\* *Colossians 2:9* Greek in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

\* *Colossians 3:4* Some manuscripts read *our*.

## **E. JESUS DIED AS ONE OF US, FOR ALL OF US, FOR ALL OF CREATION**

### 1. Thomas Torrance sums this up;

We must think of the Son of God as engaging with the forces of darkness immediately he became incarnate, for the whole of his life was a redemptive operation in our human nature where the forces of evil have entrenched themselves and seek to enslave us.

He was made one of us in order to submit himself to those forces of evil, in order to both bear and vanquish them in his own human existence and vicariously provide for us a way of saving obedience and communion with the Father.<sup>5</sup>

### **I Corinthians 15:20-28**

<sup>20</sup> But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

<sup>v24</sup> After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. [Greek *every ruler and every authority and power.*]\*

<sup>25</sup> For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. <sup>26</sup> And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

<sup>27</sup> For the Scriptures say, "God has given him authority over all things."\* (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.)

<sup>28</sup> Then, when he has conquered all things, the Son will present himself to God, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

---

<sup>5</sup> T.F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, edited by Robert Walker, 2009, p.209-10

\* *1 Corinthians 15:24* Greek *every ruler and every authority and power.*

\* *1 Corinthians 15:27* Ps 8:6.

## CONCLUSION:

### **A. SO WHEN WE PICTURE JESUS AS OUR CONQUERING KING,**

1. let us keep in mind what he conquered, how he conquered and why
2. Jesus isn't a Conqueror or warrior in human terms
3. He came not to take fight for our particular cause or for our nation or someone else's
  - a) Not to win our petty human political squabbles and selfish battles to get our own way over others
  - b) Not even to lead us to war against other religions or atheist
4. He came to rescue everyone, no matter who they are, or what they have done
5. His victory was gained by the ultimate act of love and sacrifice on the Cross
6. He fought and won victory over the attitudes and actions that cause broken relationships
  - a) That oppose God and his way of love, peace and community
  - b) He even came to conquer our desire to conquer others in order to get control and power and our own way
7. He came to rescue the oppressed
  - a) To forgive and restore the sinner
  - b) To put our lives back together by bringing us back into relationship with God and one another
8. He came and defeated the ultimate enemy of death
9. And every morning we get up, we are able to live the new day knowing we have Jesus with us, making us more than conquerors over those things that really need conquering

10. He gives us victory every day over the only real enemy, things that threaten to separate us from God and his love

a) And we have the reassurance that in the end Jesus will have loving authority over all things, and things will be at one with God

**B. PRAYER**

---