

## **The Meaning of Victory**

### **References:**

### **Notes for Servants:**

### **Objectives:**

**General:**

**Specific:**

### **Instructions:**

1. Review last week's lesson.
- 2.

### **Bible Verse:**

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

(I Pet. 5:8)

### **Lesson:**

## **The Meaning of Victory**

What we mentioned before of the devil's attributes and his various intrigues, was mentioned to you not with the aim that you fear him but to be on your guard. In spite of the violence and craftiness of the devil, overcoming him is very possible and even very easy.

### **1 - Overcoming is possible:**

If you think always that it is difficult or impossible to conquer in the diabolic wars, you will faint, weaken and submit and consequently you will fall. But, when the devil fights you, be absolutely sure that you are able to conquer, otherwise God would not have allowed such an unequivocal war always contemplate on the biography of the saints who conquered.

Keep in mind the story of Joseph the righteous who conquered in spite of the hard temptation which he faced. As for the fall of David and Samson, you can take a lesson from the story of each of them. Know the reasons of his fall and avoid them. The stories of falling are intended for our benefit so that we be on our guard and learn from them...

### **The Holy Bible and the history provide us with various stories of conquering.**

We know that repentance is very possible however bad the condition of the person was. This is

apparent from the story of the repentance of St. Mary the Coptic, Pelagia, Baiessa, Augustine, Moses the Black, and also from the repentance of Salomon the Wise and Samson.

From the history of St. Anthony, we can know how to conquer in spite of the violence, the diversity and abundance of the wars. The same can be found out from the history of all the other saints.

**We have also to remember always that God has blessed our nature.**

When God was incarnate and took our nature, He blessed this nature. So, we address Him in the Liturgy of St. Gregory "*You have blessed my nature in You.*" This nature has become very able to overcome the devil. Suffice us that we have become the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in us (I Cor. 3:16). We have also become God's children of a nature born from high, of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3,5)

**As we remember the power given to us, we should likewise remember the spiritual powers surrounding us.**

We should remember that we are not alone in the battle as God's Holy Spirit helps us, reproves us with respect to sin (John 16:8), teaches us of all things (I John 2:27) and guides us into all truth (John 16:13). How then the devil can overcome us though we have the communion of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13:14) and also the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 16:23). So, we live, not we, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20)... Add to this the fact that many angels compass us, sent forth to minister for us who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14), seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses who have conquered, "*let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us*" Heb. 12:1.

**Let us remember also God's promises to us to be encouraged.**

He says, "... and, 10, I am with you always even unto the end of the world..." Matt. 28:20. So, "*If God be for us, who can be against us*" Rom. 8:31. He says to everyone of us, "*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee... for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goes t*" Josh. 1:5,9 and, "*For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee*" Acts 18:10.

**Let us remember God's promises to those who conquer in order to be zealous in our struggle.**

Read about God's promises to the pastors of the seven churches of Asia for example, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and set down with My Father in His throne*", "*He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*" Rev. 3:21, 5, "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna*", "*And I will give him the morning star*", "*And I will give thee a crown of life*" Rev. 2:17, 28,10... Indeed, he that has an ear, let him hear these promises which fill the heart with zeal and power.

**Let us also be certainly sure that it is God who fights for us.**

However powerful the devil is, what is he before God's unlimited power? Though the devil be like a roaring lion, God sends His angel to shut the mouths of lions (Dan. 6:22). Truly, "*The battle is the Lord's*" I Sam. 17:47, "*The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*" Ex. 14:14. Since it is the Lord who fights for you, do not be afraid at all then of the devil.

**2- Do not be afraid:**

Never be afraid of the devil, for in spite of all his talents and intrigues, he is weak before God's

children as the Lord has said, "**I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven**" (Luke 10:18)

The Lord has trod him on the cross, and he is no longer "the prince of this world" as before. The Lord said of him before the crucifixion, "*Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out*" (John 12:31), "*The prince of this world is judged*" (John 16:11). Thus, the Lord says, "**Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy**" (Luke 10:19).

The Lord's promise to us that we would tread over all the power of the enemy is a promise full of power and comfort, which removes away fear from the hearts... The church so appreciates such divine promise, that it put it at the end of the thanksgiving prayer in order that we may mention it in our prayers every day or even every hour so as not to be afraid of the devils or all the power of the enemy.

**Then, the devil has no authority over us, but we have the authority over him.**

Even the devils are subject unto us through the name of the Lord (Luke 10:17). The Lord even made casting out devils in the foremost of the signs that follow the believers (Mark 16:17). Of course the gift of casting out devils must be preceded by victory in the diabolic wars. Whoever overcomes the devil's temptations and enticements and stands steady is feared by the devil and he gets power over him.

**The devil dominates only the person who submits to him...**

True are the words of the common saying, "It is the slaves who create the masters". This means that the humility and submission of the slaves make the masters prevail and vaunt. So is the case with those who submit to the devil, but whom the Son makes free, they shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

**The thing which the devil likes most is to find you afraid of him.**

For in your fear you become weak in front of him and get confused. You think that you will certainly fall in his hands so your spirit is broken and you yield to him unable to resist... This is what he wants of you because fear gives him power over you. However, the Lord Jesus Christ advises us not to fear at all, "*It is I; be not afraid,*" (Matt. 14:27), "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27). This resembles also a big balloon which appears huge but the prick of a small pin makes it nothing. The devil is like this, clamour with no power. He tries to frighten you but has no power for he has not the absolute liberty to do what he wants.

**There is God, the Almighty who prevents the devil according to His own will.**

In the story of Job the Just, the devil did not follow his own will but was confined to the scope which God allowed him (Job 1,2). The devil is not so powerful that you ought to fear him. The mere sign of the cross makes him escape from your face.

### **3. Resist the devil**

It is good to remember the words of St. James the apostle, "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7). The expression "flee from you" proves the weakness of the devil, for the apostle did not say, "resist him and he will depart from you." but he said, "he will flee from you". The devil feels the pulse of the person to find out his metal. If he finds him of the kind that fears, he begins to amuse himself with such a person and makes him his toy. But if he finds him strong and struggling, refusing to be conquered, the devil fears him and escapes from him... So, resist the devil and do not be deceived by his power for St. Peter the apostle says first, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring

lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour", then he says directly after that, "*Whom resist steadfast in the faith.*" (I Pet. 5:9). That means you ought not be frightened by his roaring as a lion but you ought to resist him. Let your heart be as the heart of a lion more powerful than he. When it comes to your mind that the devil roars as a lion, remember the words of Daniel, "*My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths*" (Da. 6:22). Stand against the devil strongly and firmly resisting with all your power...

#### **Do not submit but resist in the battle as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

Fight with all your power and ask God's help. At this point, I like what is stated in the canticle, "*Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*" (Cant. 3:7,8). Be learned then how to fight all that comes to you from the devil, and let your sword be on your thigh and as the psalmist says, "*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously*" (Ps. 45:3,4)

#### **4. With faith You conquer the devil with faith, but what faith? It is:**

The faith that God works with you, that God is able to annul the power of the devil and all his snares set for us, the faith that God wills that, "... *the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous*" (Ps. 125:3), and the faith that God is more powerful than all the intrigues of the devil and that God Himself fights for us. "*The battle is the Lord's*" (I Sam. 17:47), "*The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace*" (Ex. 14:14).

You must believe that the battle is the Lord's. It is not you who fight the devil but God fights him in you and with you. It is God who gives you the power to fight and the weapon which you will use and the experience of fighting the devils as David the prophet says, "*Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight.*" Ps. 144:1

Did you take God with you in your wars, your temptations and in your problems? If you are defeated, this may be because you did not take God with you. God is absolutely able to conquer in you and to be glorified in you however little your power is and slight your persistence, for the Holy Bible states, "*There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few*" (I Sam. 14:6).

#### **We notice how David the prophet conquered in his battles with faith.**

He says, "*If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick... our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snares of the fowlers... Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.*" (Ps. 124), "*But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord... keep me from the snares which they have laid for me and the sins of the workers of iniquity*" (Ps. 141:9), "...*refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee, O Lord: I said Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living*" (Ps. 142:4,5). "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13)

#### **5. Fight with humility**

##### **St. Anthony used to conquer the devils with humility.**

Whenever they gathered around him, he used to address them humbly, "Ye strong, what do you want with me who am weak?" and he prayed, "Save me, O God, from those who think I am of any worth though I am too weak to fight even the youngest of **them.**" When the devils heard him raising such a prayer full of humility, they could not endure but vanished like smoke.

### **St. Macarius the Great too conquered the devil with humility.**

Once, the devil appeared to St. Macarius and said, "Ah for you Maccari What thing you do and we do not! You fast and we eat nothing, You keep awake and we do not sleep. You inhabit the desert and wilderness and we also; but you overcome us with one thing". The saint asked what that thing was and the devil answered, "It is with your humility that you overcome us."

### **Humility overcomes the devil for many reasons, among which are the following;**

- First: because the devil is not humble and humility reminds him of his **pride** which was the cause of his fall.
- Second: because humility reminds him of the image of Jesus Christ who emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a slave in order to save humanity. Mere memory of this troubles him and he departs.
- Third: Because the humble person, feeling his weakness, seeks the power of God to help him in fighting the devil and this is the thing which the devil fears most.

### **6. By wisdom and discernment:**

When a thought haunts your mind, you have to examine it well: Is it of the diabolic wars? What is right and what is wrong of it? Do the same thing with the visions and dreams and with the advice of others... and with all deceptions of the devils... The apostle draws our attention to such awareness, discrimination or discernment saying, "... *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.*" (I John 4:1)

### **7. By counsel and confession:**

Spiritual guidance reveals the intrigues of the devils and shows how to escape them. The guide also prays for the soul which reveals its thoughts in order to be saved as St. Paul the apostle says, "*Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy...*" (Heb. 1 3:17). So, who follows his own will in the spiritual path, may fall in the snares of the devils, and it is said, "Those who have no guide, fall as the leaves of the trees."

The person who confesses gets rid of many sins due to the virtue of confession.

The devils of these sins cannot bear the humiliation of the person who confesses so they fly away. The devils also like to work in darkness and confession reveals them. Guidance breaks their snares and the dispensation given in the sacrament of confession destroys their labour. So, we find that the person who confesses his sins and obeys guidance leads a life of repentance and is saved from the diabolic wars. Though sin may not leave him entirely, its power becomes weak when attacking him.

### **8. Watchfulness and caution:**

It is not enough to confess and reveal yourself asking for guidance, but you ought to be watchful for your own salvation as the apostle says, "*Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion...*" (I Pet. 5:8).

### **9 By prayer and fasting:**

When the disciples were unable to cast out the devil, the Lord said to them, "*This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting*" Mark 9:29.

## **Conclusion**