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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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Victory

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Nov-Dec 1971, Vol. 49-6.

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

"Thanks!" "Victory!" The Apostle has been dealing with the most formidable enemies of human hope and confidence. It is as though he had called out these giants, arrayed them, and dealt very effectively with every one, immobilizing them by the Cross of Christ.

The first one to be so dealt with is the formidable colossus of condemnation - the law. No man could ever stand up to that vaunting force. It had challenged every generation, and always rendered men casualties and defeated. Indeed, in the sovereignty of God one purpose of its existence was to expose the weakness and impotence of man in his unregenerate state. But grace, the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, manifested in fullness in Christ crucified and risen, has slain the law's power of condemnation, and has risen over that prostrate form with this exultant shout: "Thanks!" "Victory!" "Through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The strength of the law was sin and this monster son of that "Goliath" was the next to be dealt with in this tremendous chapter.

What a force is sin! Every conceivable recourse has been made to neutralize it: ceremonial righteousness; psychological justification; philosophical reasoning; fatalistic evasion; sublimation

and ideological make-believe; to say nothing of the agonies of struggle and striving. But sin remains victor of the field. Do what you may, and call it what you will, it scorns all efforts to put it off. Until Christ came and He was "made unto us from God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption"; the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" ... "Made sin for us (in our stead) that we might be made the righteousness of God through faith in him". "By his Cross he triumphed", and over that grave the triumphant cry breaks forth: "Thanks!" "Victory!" "Through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The law, sin, and the consummation of both - death! What an enemy! What a power! In its own realm it is final, and hope is silent. It is the refuge (?) of the hopeless and abandoned. And yet, it is not numbed; it has a 'sting', and, inasmuch as it is an 'enemy', it is a power.

We will not enlarge upon this parent of sorrow, loneliness, disappointment and desolation. Neither can it be dismissed by that philosophy which says - to man in general - "there is no death".

But, says the Apostle, "death is swallowed up in victory"! "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" It assailed the incorruptible Son of God, and He turned and plucked its sting from it. He, by dying, destroyed death for ever for all who put their faith in Him. Over death He conquered by His resurrection; for "now is Christ risen from the dead", the trumpet has sounded - "Thanks!" "Victory!" "Through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The Apostle does not stop there. He adds an inspiring, heartening word of assurance for all who "labour" in "the work of the Lord". "Wherefore..." 'Be not disconcerted by condemnation, by your own consciousness of fault or imperfection; by the persistent thrusts of the accuser; by the shortness of tenure to finish the work; by the disappointments which time brings. Because of this universal triumph of the One for whom you labour, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding... inasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

"Thanks be to God!" "Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"