Declare His Glory among the Nations – 1 Chron. 16:24

We are all very aware of the increasing turmoil in many of the countries where we work. Some people have been expelled and some have lost their jobs and their residence. If the pressure has increased on us, it has increased so much more on our brothers and sisters from local backgrounds and especially on BMBs*. How should we react to all this? How are we to comfort those whose lives have been shattered by events? Clearly we are all under a growing satanic assault.

Early Methodists liked to sing a song celebrating Satan's defeat. The song had 18 verses and a rousing chorus:

Shout, shout we are gaining ground
Hallelujah
We'll shout old Satan's kingdom down
Hallelujah

This may lack sophistication but their note of confidence and assurance of victory over the enemy sounds a bit like the shout of victory in Rev. 12:10-12.

"Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers (and sisters) ***has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before God. And they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives unto death. Therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you earth and sea for the devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows his time is short."***

Clearly we are involved in the same continual opposition that the first century believers faced. It is all part of the age-long battle between God and the powers of darkness. The battle is depicted in the first verses of Rev. 12: 1-9. We need to be constantly reminded that our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against satanic principalities, against the rulers of darkness, against forces of evil in the spirit world. All the time the devil seeks to tear down the work of God.

He seeks to:

- instigate sin and betrayal (Jn. 13:2; Gen. 3:4-5)
- tempt and slander the righteous (Jn. 1:9-10; Mt. 4:11)
- inflict suffering on the innocent (Job 2:7)
- sow discord (Mt. 13:38-39)
- remove the good seed of the Gospel (Mt. 13:19)
- blind the eyes of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4)
- prowl about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8)

At all times we are engaged in a mortal conflict with a terrible dragon! But we can win and win triumphantly! From all the heavenly hosts came a very loud shout so that it sounded like a single voice, ***"Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ have come for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down!"***

The conquest of Satan guarantees that as believers we can live in victory and this can be a present reality now. God has bought us deliverance. His authority over the enemy has been demonstrated. His reign has begun because of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and His ascension into glory.

Satan can never even enter the courtroom to bring a charge against us. (Rom. 8:33-34) We can live free of any accusation or oppression of Satan or his demonic forces, ***"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb."*** It is by the blood of the Lamb that we can live in victory and joy.

The second cause of victory is that, ***"They did not love their lives even unto death"***. We walk the Calvary Road. We die to self. We seek to renounce all 'self-rights'. We take up our cross daily and follow the Lord Jesus reckoning ourselves dead to sin.

A Lutheran bishop was imprisoned in a German concentration camp during World War II. The bishop was frequently tortured by SS guards trying to get a confession out of him. The intensity increased, but the bishop would not confess. Finally, the officer having inflicted terrible injuries yelled, *"Don't you know that I can kill you?"* The bishop answered him, *"Yes, I know, but I have already died."* The SS guards appeared to be paralysed because all their cruelties were based on the presumption that, to the bishop, physical life was his most precious possession and therefore he would be willing to make any concession to save it.

The Roman World learned this truth in the first three centuries A.D. and many in Africa and Asia (especially China) have learned it since. Nothing could beat down these believers – not prison, not beatings, not even the threat of death because they had already died with Christ. In losing their lives they found life (Mt. 16:26). The power of the Resurrection throbbed in their souls because whether they lived or died made not a scrap of difference for they were the Lord's! (Rom. 14:8).

This is how to live and live in triumph in these difficult days in our ministry. In all probability things will get worse for we are moving towards the closing days of history! The Evil One will use every weapon against the advance of the Kingdom of God in these lands and among these peoples. It may be that the increase in demonic power is the last desperate effort by the Evil One who already knows that he is doomed. For us, however fierce and confusing may be the battle, we know that, ***"Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"***. (Rom. 8:39)

The secret is not new. We were taught this when we entered our company. It is the daily experience of the Cross in our lives. It is a joyous dedication to doing the will of God whatever the cost. When the inner battle is won, we can confidently face the battle raging in the nations in which we live because, ***"In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us"***. (Rom. 8:37)

When the church in North Africa was going through intense persecution in the first century, Cyprian the Bishop of Carthage, wrote this to a friend, **"If I could ascend some high mountain and look out over this wide land, you know very well what I would see – robbers on the high roads, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheatres men murdered to please applauding crowds – selfishness and cruelty, misery and despair under all roofs. But in the midst of it, I have found a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people are called Christians and I am one of them."**

So we may be bruised and buffeted by many antagonistic forces, but we don't care because we have overcome the world! So lift up your hearts and sing whatever circumstances you find yourself in today. Go forth with a song of victory and joy in your hearts. Rev. 15:4 says, ***"All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed."*** [See also Malachi 1:11 and Psalm 86:9].

As the Holy Spirit empowers us to do "righteous acts" the nations will see and some will begin to worship. The vision will be of God Himself. We will be wholly forgotten. This year may the glory of the Lord so overwhelm us that we are able to face the difficulties around us. They will seem as nothing compared to that glory and we will be able to overcome them triumphantly.

* Believers from a Muslim background