

Christ our Victory  
Sermon given at Wren's Cathedral Wroxall Abbey

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013

I watched with some fascination recently the Jonathan Dimbleby's documentary of the battles for Egypt and Liberia in the Second World War. When one is old enough to remember these events at first-hand it makes the event more real somehow.

First it was the Italian victory coming from Liberia then the British forces scored a victory led by General Wavell by pushing them back. Once the German Panzer divisions however were sent over then the British forces retreated in some disarray. Three times ground was fought over in the two countries for two years. Winston Churchill got more and more frustrated and first General Wavell is replaced by General Claude Auchinleck . Defeats continue so this brilliant General is replaced by someone who is difficult to get on with, full of his own importance and impossible to work with. A man called General Montgomery.

Possibly one of the greatest battles of the Second World War from the British point of view was the second battle of El Alamein commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942. The German forces were driven out of North Africa shortly after this action. This victory against General Rommel and the German forces was so desperately wanted that the church bells which had remained silent since 1939 were given special permission to ring.

Normally the bells were a sign that the German invasion of the UK had commenced.

It is truly amazing what a victory does to a nation as well as individuals. Morale is heightened and the war effort was increased with a growing expectation that the final result would be in our favour. ,

It brought people together who would not normally associate with each other.

### **SPIRITUAL APPLICATION**

In the spiritual role of our lives we often also need victory.

There are so many things we need to conquer in our lives. For some it is just trying to live without pain, hurt or guilt. For others it is struggling with relationships with family members or others. I know of a man who fell in love with a young woman and it never came to anything and she married another. He has spent his whole life mourning for her and to some extent to has destroyed that emotional side of his life. From what I understand he has never looked at another woman.

Some have severe dread of happenings, fear caused by traumatic experiences of the past. For others it is the fear of illness or death.

If we let him, Jesus Christ has many answers to our fears and our doubts. Moreover, he can bring us into victory so that the church bells start to ring out in our lives sometimes for the first time in many years.

### **CHRIST HAD FIRST TO OBTAIN HIS OWN VICTORY**

When Jesus Christ was on earth he was not fighting against wicked men only but against principalities and evil powers in the heavenlies. His fight in the wilderness for instance was against the Devil (Mat 4:11).

His struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane was against the devil trying to killing him to prevent him going to the cross (Mk 14:32-43).

When Peter tried to prevent Jesus going to Jerusalem where Jesus had told his disciples he was going to die, Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan." (Mat 16:23).

We fight against the same powers

For we do not **wrestle** against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places* (Eph 6:12).

By the way what does the word VICTORY mean?

It is defined as "overcoming of an enemy or antagonist" or "achievement of mastery or success in a struggle or endeavour against odds or difficulties".

Christ had to achieve the ultimate victory over death before we could experience victory in our lives.

Jesus not only died for our sins but was raised from the dead and now lives forever at the right hand of the Father. He has special authority and power.

Listen to what the writer to the Hebrews says,

Accordingly, Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant. Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever Heb 7:22-28.

This means that we can come to a Holy God through Jesus Christ and he welcomes us through the finished work of Christ.

Even the fear of death is removed when we have a true relationship with Jesus. Paul cries, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"<sup>i</sup> the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:55-56.

The Apostle John in his old age writes this.

...for whatever is born of **God conquers the world**. And **this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith**. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 Jn 5:4-5

Faith in Christ is born when we repent of our sin and turn in faith to the Lord Jesus.

Once that happens Jesus sends another helper to be with us always. He promised this after he ascended to heaven. It is called the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever-- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” John 14:16-18.

How do we get victory? through prayer, meditation and reading of the scriptures These exercises are seen as speaking to God and hearing him speak to us.

When in distress we do not know what to pray for so the Holy Spirit helps us in a truly amazing way. You see we are not alone when we pray. The Holy Spirit is with us every minute of the time.

So when we have these dilemmas in life the Bible says this.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who <sup>ii</sup> have been called according to his purpose. (NASV)

To unpick that a little.

We are in distress, we pray but how to pray? While we are contemplating this dilemma the Holy Spirit hears the unheard groaning of a broken or desperate heart and utters those unheard cries to God. You see he, the Holy Spirit, searches our hearts to find out what would be beneficial to us and presents those cries before the Father’s Throne. Wow!

The Holy Spirit searches our heart

The searching of the heart is very much a Biblical thought. King David understood the importance of allowing God through the Spirit to search the heart. He knew that the heart is deceitful and who can know it? As Jeremiah put it, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately

wicked; who can know it? I the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,” Jer 17:9-10. So King David when in prayer said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps 139:23-24).

So often we deceive ourselves into believing that we are right with God when undertaking an examination of our own hearts. The heart or the seat of our emotions often drives us into all kinds of wrong yet convinces us that what we are doing is not all that bad. When however, we allow the Holy Spirit to monitor our desires and aspirations then our intemperate desires are tempered with the influence of the grace of God. As our will combines with the will of the Father which happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us then we can confidently say “And we know that all things God works for the good...”

Even more to come. He looks at what is happening to us at the time. He sees the trials, the anxiety about work, relationships, health issues and so on and makes all those things happening to us, some bad, some good, he makes all those things work for our good. He takes control of the invisible aspects of our life and reorganises it. Why does he take the trouble? Because you have been called according to God’s purpose and he will do anything to help you.

#### .JESUS ALSO INTERCEDES FOR US

“Therefore He (Jesus) is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” Heb 7:25.

We have to be very careful not to usurp the work of the Holy Spirit and Christ by suggesting that intercessory prayer so called is more superior than prayer. Since the death of Christ on the cross there is just one man standing between God and man, that is the man Christ Jesus.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,” 1 Tim 2:5

Having used the most detailed theological arguments he can muster, the author cries out, “What shall we say to these things?” The Christian is foreordained, predestined, called, justified, and will be glorified. He will

be changed into the image of God's son and be glorified. God having undertaken all this for us then Paul raises the question, "who can be against us?" What person or evil force or anything else can interrupt our communion with God? Even those who appear to be against us are being used by God to shape our characters and personalities.

Finally, he declares that death is an enemy so when he rose he gave us assurance that we have eternal life. Our spirits will never die but be with him if we have a relationship with him.

Listen to Paul

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death, is your sting?<sup>[i]</sup>

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ 1 Cor 15:50-57.

So victory in the end is ours.

To close two texts sum up what I have been saying

"Now this I know: the Lord gives **victory** to his anointed. He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand."

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ."