

The Remnant Principle - 3

by Chip Brogden

The Remnant Principle is the idea that the Lord raises up a small group of people to fulfill His original intent and bear the Testimony of Jesus, and that they must stand firm in their commitment to Him in the face of temptation and testing.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:7, Daniel 3:25-29, John 5:21

Topics: "Eternal Purpose", "Overcoming Temptation"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches on the importance of aligning ourselves with God's eternal purpose and the need for the Church to demonstrate the preeminence of Christ in the midst of a world filled with compromise and idolatry. He emphasizes the significance of overcoming daily temptations and trials by keeping Christ as the preeminent focus in our hearts, highlighting the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who remained faithful to God even in the face of a fiery furnace. The sermon delves into the concept of Overcomers, individuals upon whose bodies the fire has no power, symbolizing the refining process believers go through to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Transcript

"Upon whose bodies the fire had no power (Daniel 3:27ff)."

The Book of Daniel contains encouragement and wisdom for us who are being raised up as a Last Days Remnant of overcomers. It records a succession of attacks against the Lord's Remnant and how they overcame these attacks and demonstrated the preeminence of Christ. We have already identified some principles here. Let us review them briefly.

First, we note that whenever the Whole fails to bear the Testimony, the Lord will raise up for Himself a Remnant - a comparatively small remainder of people - who will fulfill the Lord's original and full thought for the Whole. They are not doing anything other than fulfilling God's original intent. To us it sounds so grand and special; the very word "overcomer" seems to imply that we are better than the others who are defeated, when in fact, overcoming is the normal Christian life. The entire Church is, indeed, a remnant of people called out of the nations in order to bear the Testimony of Jesus. That is OUR corporate calling, and to have anything less than that is abnormal. But in the Book of Revelation we see that there is yet a remnant within the Remnant, a band of overcomers called to demonstrate the preeminence of Christ in the midst of a Church that has failed in its corporate responsibility. So that is the situation we find ourselves in today.

Second, we find that whenever the Lord seeks to recover His Testimony in the earth by raising up a remnant the enemy will come around to test the validity of that testimony and either try to spoil it through compromise or destroy it altogether.

Third, we observe that the Lord's answer to a state of decline is to reveal Himself and His eternal purpose. Once the Lord has established for Himself a people that will represent His interests then He will move immediately to secure, protect, establish, and strengthen the Remnant. Here is what I want us to see. When we align ourselves with God's Thought, with God's Kingdom, and with God's Will in Christ, we are invincible. This is the secret to overcoming. It is not asking God to come down to where we are and bless our little ministry or work. Not at all. Instead, we leave our ground altogether and come onto the Lord's ground. We leave our earthly position and align ourselves with Heaven. We discern what the Lord's eternal Purpose is, and we set ourselves to cooperate with THAT. And when we are thus in conformity to THAT Purpose, all of Heaven is moved on our behalf. When our ministry or work is in harmony with that great movement of God then we cannot help but overcome.

GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN

We simply do not have enough respect for the tremendous energies of God that are moving in relation to the revelation of His Son. We cannot channel this for our own ends. That is like trying to capture lightning in a paper bag. And that is what we are doing when we go about things according to our own thought and mind and ask God to involve Himself with our projects. There is no end to the number of ministries, outreaches, and programs being initiated and carried out in the Name of Jesus. But of all these ministries, outreaches, and programs scarce few of them are actually aligned with God's universal Will; they do not have the Lord's End in mind. The work fills a need, but not God's Need; the work gives a sense of purpose, but there is no sense of God's ultimate Purpose. There seems to be little if any harmony with God's eternal Plan.

The "church service" does not provide a service to the Lord, but to us. It is not so much the service that I have a problem with as the sense of disconnectedness to God's ultimate Plan. From the perspective of Heaven I look down at all these church services and gatherings and meetings and what do I see? I see little hurricanes of activity, spinning around in a circle, disconnected from each other, and worse, having no correlation to God's Thought. Just an endless succession of services, gatherings and meetings that fulfill no purpose outside of themselves. A lot of wind and noise, but going nowhere.

What is the problem here? The problem is that we have lost that sense of Ultimacy. Most Christians do not understand the meaning of "preeminence", and even those who do, find it difficult to articulate it as God's Purpose for Christ, or even understand the ramifications of such a preeminence upon themselves, the Church, the world, and all Creation. That is not meant as a criticism, but as a statement of fact. Their vision penetrates no further than their own little world. The entire object of their faith is to make things more bearable for them here on earth. God is there to save them, heal them, and provide for them. Heaven is something to sing about and a place to look forward to, but it is not a present reality and the object of their affection here and now, or something to be demonstrated and brought to bear upon earth's "reality". Church exists to get them through from one meaningless week to the next. The ministry exists to keep them propped up and pumped up.

We are afflicted with a chronic smallness. Our God is too small, our Jesus is too small, our perception of Heaven is too small, our idea of Church is too small, our concept of following Jesus is too small. Without a

vision we are a small, petty, trifling people. May God give us the revelation of Christ! Oh God, gives us that vision of Him! If we are illuminated to see Him then we cannot remain small any longer. He is God's Answer for smallness. This Testimony is a boundary-breaking thing, an overshadowing thing, an expansive and increasing thing: "Of the increase of His Government and peace THERE SHALL BE NO END (Isaiah 9:7a)." Not only will there be no end of His Kingdom, but there will be no end of HIS INCREASING! Oh God, we cannot fathom that! We cannot comprehend that! It cannot be contained. We cannot take it and fit it into our program. We have to find a way to fit into IT, and not the other way around.

THE ENEMY'S PLAN

In the third chapter of Daniel we have the third assault upon the Remnant, and we are immediately confronted with the spirit of Antichrist. Right here in the plain of Dura, in the middle of Babylon, is a gold idol which is sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide. Well, here is that number six representing man, and here is an image set up by man, and a decree from man that all men should worship it, or die.

Oh yes, we thought that Nebuchadnezzar would have learned something from that dream and interpretation, did we not? But no, he is as wicked as ever, just as self-centered as ever. Truth to him was just something to fill his appetite for knowing what he did not know. He still does not know it. He will not be changed by it. The cost is too great. He is a poor, dumb pawn in the hands of darkness, blinded by his own pride and selfish ambition.

Where is Daniel during this crisis? We do not know. He is not mentioned in this account, so perhaps he was away on the king's business. What an opportune time for darkness to move in and attempt to overtake Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The enemy has despaired of its covert attempts to be rid of them, and now he brings everything out into the open and challenges them with what appears to be an insurmountable trial. If they bow down and worship the idol then the enemy wins; and if they refuse to bow down and worship then they will be thrown into the fiery furnace, and the enemy still wins. Either way, the enemy gets what he wants. There seems to be no way out of this one.

Now how would we respond to this situation? If Babylon represents the spiritual antichrist at work in the world system today then may I say that the 60X6 gold idol is still requiring you to bow down to it. It confronts you every day on this earth and is requiring that you pay it homage. There it is, plain as day, and the easiest thing in the world is to bow down to it - give in a little, compromise a little, let yourself go in this area, don't be so strict in this or that, and so on. All the while this beautiful music is playing, and it seems so right, so justifiable. Besides, everyone else is doing it! Even other "Christians" are doing it, so why not you?

THE TEMPTATION

What is THE temptation? When we take the thousand and one little temptations and put them all together, to what end are they trying to bring us? Is there an overriding purpose for all these varied temptations we face? I believe there is, and I believe it can be summed up in this one passage of Scripture:

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols (I John 5:21)."

This verse seems totally out of place in that first epistle of John, and appears to be an anti-climactic ending to such a beautiful letter, but it is actually a very appropriate ending. John is the apostle of Testimony, and he has summed up for us exactly what an Overcomer is. But let us quote this from the

Amplified Bible for an even greater insight:

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols (false gods)--[from anything and everything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life]."

So what is he saying? On the one hand, you have God's Ultimate Purpose which says that Christ will have the preeminence in all things, beginning with each disciple individually, and with the Church corporately, and with all of Creation collectively. On the other hand, you have these false gods represented by anything and everything that would attempt to occupy the place in your heart due to God, and every sort of substitute for Him that would take the first place, the preeminent place, in your life. It is a direct challenge to the preeminence of Christ, the quintessence of antichrist, trying to gain the preeminence for itself so as to rob Christ of His position.

This, to John, bears directly upon the Testimony of Jesus. Just look at his words in his third epistle: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (3 John 10)."

What is the heart of the controversy here? Is John just jealous because Diotrephes does not recognize his apostleship? No, that is not the issue at all. John is jealous, but he is jealous for THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST, for that is the very essence of the Testimony, the whole reason for the Church to exist. And here is this man, Diotrephes, taking the preeminence for himself! This is untenable to John. He calls this evil, and says anyone taking the preeminence in this way has not seen God (verse 11). Are we prepared for such a confrontation? Can we handle such language? Pastor, how will you fare under that sort of spotlight? Prophet, will you pass the test? What about you, Apostle? And you, Deacon? And you, Elder? And you, Reverend? And you, Pope? And you, High Priest? And you, Televangelist? And you, Worship Leader?

I doubt that we are ready for a truly apostolic man. We give a lot of weight and attention to the "prophetic", and that is needed, but we need to look at an issue of equal importance: what exactly constitutes something as "apostolic"? An apostle is someone sent to set things in order, to establish things upon a foundation. It implies that there is either no order, or disorder; either no foundation, or a wrong foundation. And the "order" is CHRIST FIRST and everything else beneath Him. The foundation is CHRIST AS ALL IN ALL. You need to get that. It is not bishops, elders, and overseers running around poking their noses in everyone's business, demanding submission to themselves - free spirits trying to get a following who will pay them tithes. These ones are just Diotrephes reincarnated, loving the first place, making a name for themselves. Nothing about them has changed in two thousand years. John says it is ANTICHRIST, it is EVIL, and these people HAVE NOT SEEN GOD.

What makes John apostolic? First, he has seen and heard something. He has the Revelation of Christ. He has seen God's End. Second, he is apostolic because he burns with jealousy against anything which attempts to take the preeminence over Christ. To John, anything taking the preeminence for itself in the Church that Jesus is building is antichrist, and anything giving it the preeminence is idolatry. He has put his finger on Diotrephes, and says, "The whole problem with this man is he loves the preeminence. He has taken upon himself that which is due Christ, and Christ alone. For that reason, IF I come, I will remember

his deeds." Even as an apostle, he did not force himself into the situation and exercise some kind of human power. That, in and of itself, would have just been an exchange of one kind of preeminence for another. John will wait until he is asked: but IF he comes, he says, he will set it right; he will set it in order; he will secure the Testimony of Jesus in that assembly.

That is the sort of radical, uncompromising attitude he says we must exercise over our own hearts, for as the disciples go, so goes the Church. Just look at the gravity of his words! "Keep yourself from ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from ANY SORT of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life." Fanatical, impossible directions! Do you really mean to say that there can be NOTHING that takes first place in my life but Christ? Is that what it comes down to? Absolutely, that is precisely what is at stake, and that is precisely where the battle rages, and that is precisely why we are being tempted on a daily basis. Bound up in that is a lot of good things - spouse, children, friends. Bound up in that is a lot of religious things - church, ministry, work, calling, title, position. Bound up in that is a lot of reasonable things, a lot of moral things, a lot of innocent things. But the crux of the matter is where does Christ fit in? All we have to do to be defeated is to put Him some place other than first. Either He is Lord OF all, or He is not Lord AT all.

THE TESTIMONY

If the Testimony of Jesus states that He will have the preeminence in all things, then how can we bear that Testimony if He does not have the preeminence in our own heart? If He is not first place THERE, how can we proclaim His preeminence elsewhere? We do not have to bow down to a literal idol, all we have to do is have some unsundered portion of our heart, some divided affection, a little love for this thing or that thing that tugs on us when Christ calls us to give it up, and we have already bowed down to antichrist. We have already taken the mark. Oh, it is a serious thing, a profound thing, and how we need to get before God and lay everything down! Otherwise, the Testimony is hindered. Do you see that?

There was no debate, no question among the Remnant as to whether or not they would bow down. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." In other words, "We do not have to think about this at all. There is no anxiety on our part, not the slightest hesitation. We serve a Living God, and our God is able to deliver us out of the worst that you can deal to us, and He will deliver us out of your hand. We have aligned ourselves with Him that His Purpose may be seen in the earth, and you cannot stop that. But even if He does not deliver us, we will never serve your gods, and we will never bow down to your idol."

How were they able to maintain the Testimony? There was no hesitation in answering because they had already answered the question a million times before in countless temptations and testings all directed towards getting them to move just slightly to the left or to the right of the Narrow Path, but they would not budge. They overcame daily, and this, to them, was just another one of those daily things. A day in the life of an Overcomer. Here we are, just standing firm for God's Kingdom and God's Will. That is all. It makes no difference whether the idol is sixty cubits tall or six feet tall or whether it can be measured in terms of height and width at all. Whether it is meat, or wine, or women, or power, or position, or bowing down to this thing or that thing, outwardly or inwardly, we are submitted to a Kingdom that is filling all things, a Christ that is preeminent over all things, a Name that is above every name.

And you know the story, how that Testimony got them thrown into the fiery furnace. They fell down bound into the midst of the furnace. I have seen television programs try to explain that the three men were in some cool corner of the furnace and that is how they survived. Yet the Scripture plainly says they fell into

the middle of it. Right into the hottest part of the fire they were cast, and it seemed for a moment that the darkness had overtaken them. They had not bowed, we expected that, but at last we are rid of them, they thought. But...

"[Nebuchadnezzar] answered and said, Lo, I see FOUR men loose, walking about in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God (Daniel 3:25)."

Go back to what I said earlier: when we align ourselves with God's Thought, with God's Kingdom, and with God's Will in Christ, we are invincible. I do not mean, of course, that we cannot die, or that we cannot be tempted or tested. Many have given their lives for the sake of the Testimony, and many more will. I mean "invincible" as something more profound than mere prolonging of earthly life, but overcoming as He overcame. Overcoming is not avoiding the evil, but persevering in spite of the evil. The Lord did not avoid death in order to overcome, but headed straight into Death, Hell, and the Grave, meeting it head-on, and coming out the other side in Resurrection. Death has no power over the one who has died and been raised to life; thus, we too must take up our cross, lay down our lives, and die that we may live.

Overcomers may not always avoid the fiery furnace altogether, but when cast into it they walk about in the midst of the fire. I am speaking figuratively, of course. The Bible talks about our fiery trials, and they are our portion. The fiery furnace is the means by which God may reduce us to Christ, and consume all that is of fleshly, natural origin. Like these three, we may go into the fire bound, but we come out unfettered. The dross is consumed, and the silver is refined.

Overcomers are those upon whose bodies the fire has no power (Daniel 3:27a). Put them in the fiery furnace and they are not consumed, only refined, only purified. It only makes them that much more conformed to the image of the Fourth Man, the Son of God, the Lord Christ. The fire has no power over them because the fire has no power over Him, and there He is in the midst. They do not seek the fiery furnace, but neither do they shrink from it when it comes. They do not ask for temptation and testing, but they are not afraid of it. They do not look for the devil behind every rock, but when they find him they demonstrate the preeminence of Christ over all things and call for his submission to Him. This is the Testimony of Jesus and the ministry of the Overcomers.

The Lord reveals Himself to us when we are at our end, when the fire burns the hottest. When we have reached the end of our ourselves then He intervenes. He is committed to us there in the fire, because we are committed to Him outside the fire. As we have stood for His Will and His Kingdom in a state of universal compromise, darkness, and deception, so He will stand with us in our state of temptation, testing, and trial. Towards what end? That the preeminence we have been proclaiming may be demonstrated. He will rise to the occasion and prove Himself faithful. "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort (Daniel 3:29b)."

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