

Blood Overcomes Intruders (Bacteria and Viruses) as the Blood of the Lamb (Christ) Overcomes the Enemy

Chapter 7: (BLOOD/Overcoming): Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org / Studies

Resource: In His Image by Dr. Paul Brand & Philip Yancey. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. (1984). *In his two companion books, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made and In His Image, Dr. Brand with the help of Philip Yancey, places an emphasis on the individual human cells in our body and their varying roles within the body for the sake of the body as a whole. He then points to the Body of Christ (the Church) and makes insightful analogies about the connections and forces that unite and guide our human bodies (and the Body of Christ). The suggested process is to review the questions prior to reviewing the content. If time is limited, each person in a group discussion should read the content prior to spending time in a group discussion to answer the questions.*

John 16:33 - “These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (NKJV)

Rev 12:11 – And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (NKJV)

Heb 12:2 – “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (NIV)

Questions for Personal Applications or Group Discussions:

1. What was the greatest advance in medicine at that time? What was the sacrifice? What was the outcome?
2. What does it mean to overcome by the blood of the Lamb? How can that help us today?
3. What does having “wise blood” mean physically and spiritually? Discuss how some of our white blood cells live nearly our life time in order to remember what needs to be done to do battle certain invaders once again?
4. How are we strengthened (immunized) each time we celebrate communion? What is it specifically we are to remember? Isn't this reason enough to go to Worship to celebrate communion on a regular basis!
5. Discuss the importance of Christ's last command that we “Go and make disciples of all the nations – baptizing them and teaching them all that I have commanded”. Doesn't it make sense that everyone in all nations need to rely on the wise blood of Christ since that is the only way to be protected against the Enemy?

As a child growing up in India, Paul Brand observed his parents using full force of person-to-person transmission of blood products in vaccinations for smallpox. With limited quantities of vaccine and no facilities for cold storage, they relied on the same methods used by Dr. Francisco de Balmis on the Spanish ship Maria Pita when he was commissioned by King Carlos IV in 1802 to take the new technique of vaccination to Bogota, Columbia. De Balmis took twenty-two orphaned boys, aged three to nine, from a poorhouse along with a few cows to serve as backup hosts. He started by vaccinating five boys. Others would form a human chain to keep the virus alive for the voyage. Using the lymph which flowed freely from the mattering sores, de Balmis kept the virus alive to be used in the vaccinations. By the end of the voyage, the last boy was keeping the virus alive. Needless to say, many things threatened the success of this voyage. When the weak virus was injected into a person, it could be shared with others to strengthen one's immune system against the deathly virus called smallpox. Countries with hundreds of thousands of people lived because of the sacrifice of these twenty-two orphans. Dr. Brand says, “This voyage called the Vacunna Expedition symbolizes the greatest advance in medicine: the capability to recruit defensive properties of one person's blood to help protect another person.”

Paul had a challenge with the use of the word “overcome” in some Scriptures such as Rev. 12:11 until he better understood the properties of blood that could be shared person-to-person to stimulate adequate antibodies targeted against a specific virus like polio or smallpox. There were and still are violent confrontations between good and evil – of Christ and Satan as the Enemy. Satan in this passage is “hurled down” and the victims, i.e., the people who have come into eternal life are described as - “They overcame him (the Enemy) by the blood of the Lamb”. Think about that victory for a few minutes.

Since blood is a symbol of life, not death, and has cleansing properties, “overcome by blood” reveals something of a cosmic significance about how God operates in the world and also enriches our understanding of the symbol of blood. Jesus said, “In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Many saw something quite different from this at the arrest, execution, and crucifixion of Christ. In contrast, the image of the Lamb, a weak and meek animal, appears many times to represent Christ – an unlikely analogy to describe the One who was to “overcome” the world! No wonder everyone was confused at that time. Brand says, “God did not need His Son to use raw power as men expected but rather served as an example of representative suffering for us” – then and now. Brand writes, “a pattern emerges through the refining fire of suffering: God responds to evil not by obliterating it but by making evil serve a higher good. God overcomes evil by absorbing it, taking it on Himself and finally, by forgiving it. Jesus overcame as the One who goes before by going right through the center of temptation, evil and death. The Good News is that Christ won the victory – He died and rose from the grave. Today, we certainly have valid emotional feelings about death but we do not have to fear death.

Brand wrote, “Imagine God, after looking with great sadness on the virus of evil that has infected His Creation, casting aside His own prerogatives to take on the shell of a victim cell of that abhorrent virus in order to vaccinate humanity against the death and destruction that are sure to follow. An analogy points to truth weakly; nothing could have more force than the simple assertion, He became sin for us”.

The Communion Celebration is a “personal reenactment of the theological reality of Christ’s life and death”. **Hebrews 2:14** summarizes what Christ accomplished – what we celebrate in remembrance as we take in the wine and bread as symbols of his blood and body. Jesus had to become one like us so that He could become a faithful high priest who made atonement (payment) for the sins of people – mainly for the original sin of disobedience – which is a sin we all commit every time we seek to be the god of our lives. We draw on the resources of Christ by celebrating the Lord’s Supper (Communion) by becoming equipped to meet temptations daily. So why wouldn’t we want to participate in Communion every chance possible?

Dr. Brand tells of a time while living in Vellore, India when one of his daughters had a severe attack of measles. Their greatest concern was how to acquire convalescent serum of someone who had overcome measles to protect their infant daughter. The word went out that the Brands needed the “blood of an overcomer”. Not of the chickenpox or someone with a broken leg but someone who had survived measles. Once given the serum, the baby’s body would manufacture her own antibodies to “overcome” measles “not by her own resistance or vitality but as a result of a battle that had taken place previously within someone else – someone who had defeated that disease. Imagine her long living blood cells would remember the structure of the specific virus and recall the army of blood cells needed to keep that specific virus from becoming a threat ever again.

Brand says that a protected person has “wise blood” filled with antibodies from numerous battles with outside invaders. Remember, every day we live at the mercy of tiny organisms (bacteria & viruses). These microbes seek to destroy us and have done so at times. The great plague of the 14th century killed one-third of Europe! In recent history, we have been threatened with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) that killed many people. We recently had a battle with Ebola that threatened not just people in Africa but practically throughout the world. That threat continues in Africa. The last one was COVID in more recent years.

Do you know what happens when our body declares war on life threatening invaders? Paul says that there are five types of white blood cells that go to work in a Houdini-like fashion and that the average white blood cell lives merely ten hours but a select few live for 60 or 70 years! These are the ones that preserve the chemical memory of dangerous invaders. These master cells safeguard the chemical secrets that remind the body how to respond to any invader previously encountered.

Jesus suffered for us. The blood of Jesus Christ has the power to overcome since He exposed Himself to severe temptations. He encountered unthinkable stress and strain and death in a cruel way to gain “wise blood” for our benefit. He battled Satan so that we who put our faith in Him and His work don’t have to battle the Enemy. We who are “believers in Christ” have been immunized with His wise blood. We have received the vaccine. We continue to do so each time we celebrate Communion. Christ says, “This is my blood – This is my body. My life was uniquely lived for you and now can be **shared** by you. Do this in remembrance of Me”. He said, “I was tempted and abandoned.” So, when as a mere human being you feel tempted and abandoned, be empowered by His strength and by the power of His Spirit. Christ said, “I have overcome the world” for you.

No doubt, an overwhelming sudden temptation can catch the strongest Christian off guard. Be prepared by relying on the wise and powerful blood of the One who goes before us. After all, there is no other workable solution. Lastly, there is a good reason why Jesus commanded us to “go and make disciples of all the nations” in Matthew 28. We all (everyone in every country) need the wise counsel of stronger (immunized) brothers and sisters to point us to the saving and empowering blood of the Lamb of Christ since this is the only way we can fight against all of the evil forces and temptations of the Enemy whose mission is to destroy us. Think on these things when you celebrate Communion again!