

Christ the Everlasting Conqueror

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon presents Jesus Christ as the Conqueror from Bozrah, who came down to make atonement for our race, conquered our enemies, and offers us His transforming power and gift of salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 63:1, Matthew 11:28, John 14:6, Romans 8:37, 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:8, Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Redemption Through Christ", "Victorious Salvation"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches on the story of Esau and Jacob, highlighting their differences in character and the consequences of their actions, leading to a powerful message on redemption and reconciliation. The sermon delves into the imagery of the prophecy in Isaiah 63:1-4, portraying a victorious and suffering Conqueror who brings salvation and redemption. It emphasizes Jesus Christ as the ultimate Conqueror from Bozrah, who went to the depths of human suffering to offer salvation to all, conquered death through His resurrection, and invites everyone to share in His triumph and receive transformative grace.

Transcript

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come (Isaiah 63:1-4).

One of the most interesting and long continued stories of the Bible gathers about the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca -- Esau and Jacob. Although the most closely related by blood, they were opposites in type, and contended with each other always. In childhood Esau became the favorite of his father, and Jacob the peculiar joy of his mother. Esau took to the fields to herd and to hunt; Jacob took to the tent to cook and care for household duties. In appearance Esau was rough and hairy; Jacob was polite and smooth of form. In texture of mind they were just as different as in bodily appearance. Esau was called a "profane" man. The word, they tell us, implies one "having no fence around him." That is, Esau was a man of the world who accepted all comers as friends and intimates, and was indifferent about moral and spiritual standards. Jacob, while not without fault, chose his companions with care, and gave God and family a

high place in his plans.

One day, after the boys had reached responsible age, Esau came in from the field worn and hungry. Jacob was ready to sit down to his dinner of herbs. The hungry Esau asked for a share in the meal. Jacob took advantage of his brother's need and bargained with him for the rights and privileges of the firstborn son. When later Jacob took advantage of his father's age and weakness, and obtained from him the blessing intended for Esau, Esau's wrath could scarcely be restrained. The elder brother's threatenings reached Rebecca's ears, and she urged Isaac to send Jacob away to avoid the bloodshed which she foresaw would soon come.

For more than twenty years Jacob was away in the land of his mother's people, matching wits with the bargain-dealing Laban, and gathering for himself a considerable household and large flocks and herds. When at last Jacob's longing for his father's house broke over bounds, he set forth on his return journey. He was half way home when he suddenly bethought himself of Esau, and remembered the ill favor in which he stood when he saw Esau last. Jacob sent messengers to Esau in Mount Seir, and the answer returned sounded very much as though Esau had neither forgotten nor forgiven. "Behold he cometh and four hundred men with him!" What could this mean except that the smoldering fires of twenty years were soon to break in flames? Jacob arranges his possession and his family in such order as seemed best adapted to appeasing his brother's wrath, and then gave himself to a night of prayer by the side of the brook Jabbok. Through divine interposition, tragedy was averted and Jacob saw his brother's face "as though I had seen the face of God."

The brothers did not tarry long together after their reconciliation. Esau insisted on their return to Mount Seir together; but Jacob, no doubt questioning the durability of their patched up differences, found a way to persuade Esau to return home alone, while he himself turned westward across the Jordan to tarry in the vicinity of Shechem. The only recorded meeting of the brothers after that was at their father's funeral. Their final separation seems to have been constrained by mutual mistrust.

Jacob descended into Egypt and died there. Esau finished out his days in Mount Seir. After the decease of the two brothers, their descendants kept up memories of past relations, and seem to have maintained some sort of communication, doubtless through the good offices of traders who passed back and forth between Egypt and the lands of the East. The contentions, however, of the two boys were transferred to their descendants, and when the children of Jacob came out of Egypt en route to the land which God had promised them, their journeys soon brought them to the border of the land of Edom (Edom is Esau), and the men of Edom denied them passage through their land. This refusal made it necessary for the children of Jacob to make a long, wearisome, dangerous circuit in order to reach the plains of Moab whence they could pass over to their possessions. This fresh affront confirmed and renewed the quarrels of the past and made irreconcilable enemies of the two nations.

When the sons of Jacob were settled in their own land, what must have been their chagrin to find that the southern boundary of their own land was the northern boundary of the land of Edom! Israel became the stronger people, and gloried in the temporal prosperity which was the birthright of Joseph. But the Edomite nation remained hard by, like a thorn in the side, and was always a check to the pride of Jacob. Sometimes there was actual war between the two nations. Even this was easier to bear than the continual irritations which arose from the ill wishes of so close a neighbor. When foreign foes came to trounce his brother, Esau stood by as a ready ally of the enemy or else showed too great readiness to share the spoils should his brother collapse. Strong kings arose in Israel and put the nations round about under tribute; but

none was able to utterly obliterate the Edomites or make of them permanent friends. Edom was a mountainous country, and Bozrah, the principal city, was built among the impregnable rocks.

Finally, Edom became the synonym and symbol for all enemies of God and of Israel. No word of cursing was stronger than to liken one to an Edomite, and nothing caused a quicker flush of shame to a son of Jacob than to remind him that his old enemy was there on his border unconquered and unconquerable. Kings of Israel and humble inhabitants of the villages of Judea used to look off down toward Edom and its impregnable city, Bozrah, and pray for power to root out the offending neighbor; and for a leader who would be able to lead a conquering army down to and back from that hated citadel.

The beauty of David and the splendor of Solomon passed. Sons of these giants held sway and passed away, and still Edom was there. By and by these dreams of earthly empire began to give way in the hearts of prophets, and the souls of these holy men became big with the pressure of the Messianic hope. They began to feel and to say that a leader would come who would set up a new order and establish the glory of Israel on an everlasting mountain top. These prophets reached out for figures which they might use to encourage the faith and hopes of the people. These holy men reached out to nature about them and told of a fruitful desert, a singing forest, skipping hills and mountains, roses in Sharon, lilies in the valley, rocks in weary lands, lions breaking fetters and flourishing roots springing from dry ground. They said the coming One would be like these, but on a glorified plane. They reached to the heavens above and described the coming One as "Sun of Righteousness," "Morning Star" and "Pavilion" of God. The lamb was the symbol of His sacrifice, bread was token of His sustaining grace, and water was typical of His life-giving force. No one name was sufficient to describe Him, so they called Him Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. And since they could find no pedigree more honorable, they called Him Son of David. It seemed that these good men had about exhausted their resources in the effort to find descriptive adjectives that would make the object of their vision truly real and attractive to others as He had already become to them.

Then one day Isaiah, whose words sound more like the speech of an eyewitness than that of a prophet speaking hundreds of years in advance, looked down toward the land of Edom. Ordinarily such an exercise would serve to dampen the fervor of a patriotic Jew. But Isaiah was seeing visions of the coming Messiah. His thoughts and desires and dreams of the night were filled with forecastings of the glory of the "desire of all nations" for whom he waited, and who was soon to appear. And so when he looked down toward Edom he saw in his vision what no man of Israel had ever seen in history. He saw a torn and tattered company of his own people coming back from that land of the ancient foe. This company was unlike any other such company that had ever come back over that road in that there were unmistakable evidences of success in their bearing, and victory was expressed by their very tread. These people had evidently been down to Edom, had conquered that terrible foe, and were now returning to Israel to spread the glad news. At the head of the company marched a leader unlike any Isaiah had ever seen before. He wore the raiment of royalty, and had every mark of kingly bearing, and yet His face was covered with blood and spittle, His eyes were red from weeping, His face was marred, and His garments were torn and stained with blood. Who could this be? this suffering Conqueror whose appearance described victory at high cost?

Sustained with courage born of the surging Messianic hope in his own breast, the prophet cried out, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" The answer came from the Leader of the triumphant host, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." But Isaiah was not yet clear as to how the Conqueror could

also be the Sufferer; so he further inquired, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" The Conqueror answered back, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Then signifying the Edomites, the ancient enemies of God, He continued, "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

The vision and the dialogue pass on to us a life-size picture of Christ as the everlasting Conqueror. Let us observe:

That this Conqueror did not camp on the border of Edom, but went down to the hitherto impregnable city of Bozrah, and wrought a victory that was complete. This is what Jesus Christ did when He came down to make atonement for our race. He did not stop in the golden palace of Caesar, with the royal robes of Herod, among the learned sons of Levi or with the landed, merchant class of Israel. He came down to a carpenter's family, was born in a stable, was cradled in a manger, lived in poverty, never held any office in either Church or State, died ignominiously between two thieves upon a Roman cross of wood, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He went clear down to Bozrah in paying the price for our redemption. He spared not Himself, but went down to the very mudsill of the house of man that He might lift up the lowest and restore them to God and take them to heaven.

Jesus does not ask for easy cases. He takes all who come. He is able and willing to save all who are lost. The rich, the poor, the high, the low, the educated, the illiterate, the wise, the humble -- "Whosoever will, let him come." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). No one else ever gave such a wide invitation. He draws no lines as to who may come, and He draws no limits as to how fully He will save. He is the Conqueror from Bozrah, the citadel of the worst nation there is. No longer shall the bars of wickedness separate men from hope. No longer shall the bands of evil habit hold penitent souls in chains. Jesus the Conqueror from Bozrah is here!

But the Conqueror did not stay in Edom. After meeting and defeating His foes, He came away in triumph. The story of Christ's redemptive work is not finished at the cross or at the tomb. There was a Calvary that was followed by a period of darkness and uncertainty. But there was also a glorious Easter morning. At the break of that holy day Jesus took upon Himself the form and power of the endless life, broke the bars of death asunder and came out of the grave, alive forevermore. When He came out in triumphant resurrection, He came with the keys of death and hell hanging from His girdle -- symbols of His universal sovereignty. The blood that stained His garments was His own blood. He had power to lay down His life, as others have, but He was different in that He had power to take up His life again. If He had stopped at the cross or at the tomb, He might have won our pity. But in His resurrection He wins our confidence and our faith. He went to Bozrah, but He came back again. He was dead, but now He is alive forevermore.

We all need a Christ of power, as well as a Christ of love. It is His resurrection from the dead that guarantees us that He is the Christ of power. We have heard of the Christian Jew who promised to accept another as Christ, if that other one could be "so born." Now we take no chances when we propose to hang our eternal destiny in faith upon anyone who can go down into death as Jesus did, and then come out of the grave in glorified form. None other ever did these things of his own power and holiness, and no one else ever will. He who is Himself the "truth, the life and the way" is my Saviour today. He breaks the fetters of sin for me. He sets my captive soul free. He conquers all my foes, and makes me conqueror too.

Finally, we observe that those who marched with the Conqueror shared with Him in His triumph. St. Paul draws a wonderful picture with just a few strokes of the pen when he speaks of Jesus as having "Led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). The picture has the example of an earthly king for its background. This king has been elevated in his chariot. Captives taken in battle are chained to that chariot and follow after it. The king lavishly throws money to the crowd that lines his "way of triumph." And Paul says Jesus is like that. He is now highly exalted, His enemies have become His footstool, and He bestows blessings upon all who follow in His train.

The grace that Jesus gives is not a mere potentiality. It is an effective transforming power. It does not merely account bad men as good. It remakes bad men and constitutes them good. It does not save men in their sins. It saves them from their sins. It does not just give them patience to submit to their foes. It gives them power to defeat their foes. It does not reconcile men to their state. It changes their estate and makes "all things new."

Not only was the Conqueror himself triumphant, but those who traveled with Him had the victory. There is a place in the ranks for all of us. Come, let us join the victorious army of Christ today. "Others have enlisted: why not you?"

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